CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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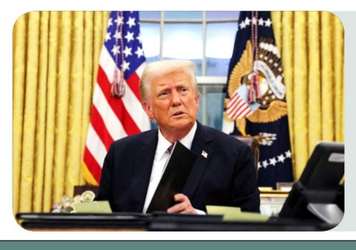

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MESSI INDIA TOUR

Chaos in Kolkata as fans protest after missing glimpse of Messi

Fans who had paid hefty prices for the event expressed their frustration while talking to the media. "It was really disappointing, we came all the way from Darjeeling for this. We couldn't even see him properly, and that was the most disappointing thing I have ever witnessed," said a fan.

KOLKATA

Chaos broke out at Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium on Saturday when thousands of spectators, who had paid steep ticket prices to see football legend Lionel Messi, protested after failing to get a clear view of him. Messi, in the city as part of his three-day, four-city GOAT India Tour 2025, entered the stadium around 11.30 am with Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul, briefly walked on the turf, waved to the crowd and acknowledged fans amid loud chants and emotional scenes.

The packed stadium echoed with applause as Messi smiled, waved and was presented with a Mohun Bagan jersey bearing his name and iconic No. 10. However, throughout his short appearance, he remained surrounded by VIPs, organisers and heavy security, obstructing the view for spectators in the galleries. Fans alleged they could not see him clearly, either directly or on the giant screens, despite waiting since morning.

Anger intensified when Messi was escorted out within minutes. Disappointed fans threw bottles onto the field, damaged banners and chairs, and some attempted to breach barricades, forcing police to intervene.

Satadru Datta, promoter and chief organiser of the Kolkata leg of Messi's GOAT India Tour 2025, was detained at the airport, where he had gone to see off the football legend and his entourage on their way to Hyderabad.

TMC, BJP slam organisers for chaos

Both ruling Trinamool Congress and opposition BJP lashed out at the organisers of an event of Lionel Messi in Salt Lake stadium on Saturday, which ended in chaos as irate spectators went on a vandalisation spree for not having a proper view of the football icon.

- West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose has sought a detailed report from the state government on the arrangements for Messi's Kolkata programme.
- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed shock over the mismanagement and announced a high-level inquiry headed by retired Justice Ashim Kumar Ray to fix responsibility and suggest corrective steps. She also apologised to Messi and the fans.

Kerala local body polls: BJP scores historic win in Thiruvananthapuram

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The BJP-led NDA registered a landmark victory in the Kerala local body polls by winning the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, ending 45 years of uninterrupted Left rule in the state capital. The result is seen as a significant morale booster for the BJP ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, particularly in Thiruvananthapuram.

In the 101-member Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, the BJP won 50 wards, while the CPI(M)-led LDF secured 29, the Congress-led UDF 19, and independents won two. The BJP fell just one seat short of an absolute majority.

The NDA also retained the Palakkad municipality after a close contest with the UDF and wrested the Thrippunithura Municipality from the Congress. In Thrissur district, where BJP leader Suresh Gopi won the Lok Sabha seat last year, the party made notable gains, winning 18 of 46 wards in Kodungallur Municipality, eight in Thrissur Corporation, seven in Kunnamkulam, six in Irinjalakuda, two each in Guruvayoor and Vadakkancherry, and one in Chalakudy Municipality.

I express my gratitude to the people of Kerala who voted for the BJP-NDA candidates in the local body elections in the state. Kerala has been enduring the UDF and LDF.

—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Strong showing in local polls widens UDF's path to victory in 2026 Assembly elections.

—V.D. Satheesan, Leader of Opposition

Priyanka questions proposed MGNREGA renaming

NEW DELHI

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday criticised the Centre's reported decision to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), saying it would result in needless expenditure without offering any tangible benefit. Her remarks followed the Union Cabinet's approval of a Bill proposing to rename the scheme as the 'Poojya Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojna' and increase guaranteed workdays from 100 to 125 annually.

Speaking to reporters, Priyanka Gandhi questioned the rationale behind altering the name of a flagship rural employment programme enacted in 2005. She argued that changing Mahatma Gandhi's name would require rebranding across offices, stationery and official records, leading to a costly and unnecessary exercise. "What is the benefit of doing this?" she asked. MGNREGA remains one of India's largest social welfare schemes, providing wage employment to rural households and ensuring livelihood security.

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Ex-IAF officer held in Assam over alleged Pak links

NEW DELHI

A retired Indian Air Force officer was arrested in Assam on charges of maintaining links with Pakistani operatives, even as police in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh detained four Kashmiri residents in a separate espionage-related case. The arrests have raised serious concerns over national security in the region.

The former IAF personnel, identified as Kulendra Sarma, a retired Junior Warrant Officer, was taken into custody late Friday night from Tezpur's Patia locality in Assam's Sonitpur district. Investigators suspect that Sarma shared sensitive and classified information with Pakistani handlers. His laptop and mobile phone have been seized and sent for forensic analysis to determine the extent of the alleged information leak.

Sonitpur Superintendent of Police Barun Purkayastha said Sarma had been under surveillance for several weeks following credible intelligence inputs. Police initially placed him under technical monitoring and moved in for the arrest after gathering sufficient evidence. Authorities are now probing whether Sarma had local accomplices and have registered a case under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Sarma retired from the Indian Air Force in 2002, with his last posting at the strategically important Air Force Station in Tezpur, which houses key air assets, including a Sukhoi-30 squadron. He later worked briefly at Tezpur University.

Vote theft proven in Aland, chargesheet filed: DKS

BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said it has been established that vote theft took place in the Aland Assembly constituency, and appropriate legal action has been initiated in the matter. Responding to queries from the media about the filing of a chargesheet against former BJP MLA and defeated candidate Subhash Guttedar, Shivakumar said there was no attempt to cover up the issue. He asserted that irregularities had indeed occurred and that a serious investigation had led to the filing of the chargesheet.

He added that Congress legislators would raise the issue in the House, stressing that the matter was not limited to Karnataka alone but reflected a larger national concern. Shivakumar said the party had come to power with the people's mandate and would not compromise on democratic values.

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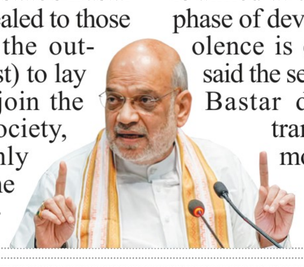
Amit Shah likens Naxalism to 'cobra snake'

BASTAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday likened Naxalism to a "cobra snake" that spread its hood in the way of development, and said the armed left-wing movement did not benefit anyone - neither those who took up arms nor the security personnel.

Reiterating the Narendra Modi government's resolve to end Naxalism by March 31, 2026, he said the Centre has decided to transform the Naxal-hit Bastar division in Chhattisgarh, comprising seven districts, into the most developed tribal region in the country over the next five years.

Addressing the closing ceremony of Bastar Olympic 2025 sport event at Indira Priyadarshini Stadium in Jagdalpur, the headquarter of state's Bastar district, Shah appealed to those associated with the outlawed CPI (Maoist) to lay down arms and join the mainstream of society, asserting that only peace can pave the way for development.The Union minister said the government has resolved to wipe out "red terror" nationwide before March 31, 2026, adding that the target is now close to being achieved. He clarified that the objective goes beyond ending Naxalism, and is aimed at ushering in a fresh phase of development once violence is eliminated. Shah said the seven districts of the Bastar division will be transformed into the most developed districts by December 2030.



QUICK READ

EU freezes Russian assets indefinitely

BRUSSELS

The European Union has agreed to indefinitely freeze Russian central bank assets held in Europe, clearing a major hurdle to using the funds to support Ukraine. The decision covers about €210 billion in Russian sovereign assets immobilised since Moscow's 2022 invasion. By ending the need for six-monthly renewals, the EU removed the risk of dissent from member states with closer ties to Russia. The move is aimed at enabling a proposed loan of up to €165 billion to Ukraine for military and civilian needs in 2026–27, to be repaid only if Russia pays war damages. Ukraine hailed the decision as a landmark step toward accountability, while Russia's central bank called it illegal and warned of legal action.

Karnataka BJP MPs hold meeting with PM Modi

NEW DELHI

BJP MPs from Karnataka met with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During the meeting the PM spoke on making governance truly people-centric. Speaking about the meeting, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya said the MPs would now work towards spreading awareness about the centre's initiatives. Sharing his experience on X , Surya said, "It was kind of him to enquire about our personal well-being too. With his guidance and leadership, we will collectively work to actively spread awareness about Union Government initiatives, ensure their proper implementation, and maximise their benefits for every citizen, in the spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas."

APARTMENT BILL

'I fear no one': DKS on threat letter over apartment bill delay

BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Urban Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar held a consultation meeting on Saturday with representatives of apartment associations at the Banquet Hall of Vidhana Soudha, discussing the Karnataka Apartment (Ownership and Management) Bill 2025. The meeting focused on gathering suggestions from residents across the five urban corporations under the Greater Bangalore Authority (GBA).

Shivakumar emphasized that the government stands with apartment residents and homebuyers, seeking their inputs to make the new bill fair and effective. Residents who could not attend were encouraged to send suggestions via email within ten days. "I have listened to your problems and your suggestions are excellent. I also own apartments and am committed to standing with you," he said.

Shivakumar said the exercise was aimed at ensuring transparency and inclusiveness in framing the new law, which is intended to replace the outdated 1972 Act governing apartment ownership and management. At the same time, the Deputy Chief Minister adopted a firm stance against what he described as attempts to pressure the government. Responding to a letter reportedly written by a resident, Kiran Hebbar, that highlighted the political influence of apartment voters ahead of the Greater Bengaluru Authority elections, Shivakumar said he would not be intimidated or compelled to act under pressure. He remarked that he was fully aware of voting patterns but was engaging with apartment residents out of goodwill and a sense of responsibility. Shivakumar also appealed to apartment dwellers to extend their support to the government in the upcoming GBA elections.

DKS states major infrastructure projects

MAJOR PROJECTS

- 2 Tunnel Roads
- Bengaluru Business Corridor
  Length: 130 km
  Cost: ₹26,000 cr

Road & Flyover Devpt

- 40 km Double-Decker Flyover
- 117 km New Flyovers
- 300 km Buffer Roads

Fit Mysuru Marathon : UoM VC chairs preliminary meeting

MYSURU

A preliminary meeting was held to discuss the framework of the "Fit Mysuru Marathon," which is being organized under the leadership of GSS Yoga Institution, Mysuru.

The meeting was held at Crawford Hall of the University of Mysore under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor Prof. N. K. Lokanath. Discussions focused on the measures required to ensure the success of the Fit Mysuru Marathon.

Speaking at the meeting, Shrihari Dwarakanath, head of GSS Yoga and GSS Group of Institutions, stated that the Fit Mysuru Marathon is being organized on January 11, 2026, with the objective of building a healthy and robust Mysuru. The marathon, being conducted in collaboration with the University of Mysore, gym associations and various other organizations, is expected to witness the participation of more than 10,000 people.

Responding to this, Vice-Chancellor Prof. N. K. Lokanath said that students from every college in the city should be involved in this mega marathon. All students residing in university hostels must also participate, and wardens should take steps to ensure their participation. Discussions were also held on selecting the marathon route, arranging separate group-wise starting points for the walk/run, and adopting a suitable slogan for the marathon.

Several participants suggested facilitating participation by enabling registration through QR codes and Google Forms. To encourage walkers at Kukkarahalli Lake to take part, it was suggested that Fit Mysuru Marathon banners be installed at the entry points of the lake for publicity. Suggestions were also made regarding the production of promotional videos providing information about the marathon, fixing a dress code, security arrangements and other related aspects.

The meeting was attended by MDJA General Secretary Dharmapura Narayan, Vivek, head of Chirag Ads, senior officials of the University of Mysore, heads of various organizations and institutions, and members.

Preliminary Event on December 21

While the main Fit Mysuru Marathon will be held on January 11, 2026, the meeting decided to organize a preliminary promotional event on December 21 at the Clock Tower premises of Manasagangothri.

Drastic reduction in Malnourished kids in Mysuru district

MYSURU

According to the NFHS-5 report, the percentage of SAM (Severely Acute Malnourished) children in Mysuru district was 7.2%, which has now reduced to 0.21%.

Similarly, the percentage of MAM (Moderately Acute Malnourished) children, which earlier stood at 15.6%, has now come down to 1.05%. This indicates a significant decline in both SAM and MAM cases, Deputy Director of the Department of Women and Child Development has stated.

In November 2025, among children aged 0–6 months, 90 children were identified as SAM (severely malnourished) and 137 children as MAM (moderately malnourished). For these children, regular health check-ups are being conducted and parents are being educated on the importance of systematic and exclusive breastfeeding.

The community is being sensitized to use locally available leafy vegetables, maintain hygiene, and adopt healthy practices. In addition, the department is providing nutritious food to pregnant and lactating

women. It has been observed that children aged 0–6 months who receive mother's breast milk along with appropriate supplementary food show higher rates of recovery from malnutrition. Among children aged 6 months to 6 years, 129 were identified as SAM and 947 as MAM. SAM children are being provided milk under the Ksheera Bhagya scheme and five eggs per week under the Srushti scheme, along with additional supplementary food items. Further, with the support of CFTRI, Mysuru, SAM and MAM children are undergoing blood tests and are being provided additional nutritional food as detailed below, with follow-up for a period of six months.

Details of nutritional food provided by CFTRI, Mysuru to SAM & MAM children:

Monday
Energy & protein-rich burfi;
Tuesday:
High-protein & iron-rich biscuits;
Wednesday
Mango bar and spirulina chikki;
Thursday
Energy & protein-rich burfi;
Friday
Mango bar + glucose-based beverage;
Saturday
High-protein & iron-rich biscuits.

With the cooperation of the Health Department, monthly health check-ups are being conducted. Children identified as severely malnourished through these check-ups are being admitted to NRCs (Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres).

The Deputy Director stated in the press release that, with the coordinated efforts of the Health Department, CFTRI, and parents, effective measures are being taken to bring SAM and MAM children out of malnutrition and ensure their overall improvement.

Tiger kills cow in Hunsur village

HUNSUR

In Nagamangala village of Hanagodu Hobli, Hunsur taluk, a tiger attacked a cow belonging to Harish, son of Shivappa, resulting in the death of the cow. Villagers have alleged that the Forest Department has failed to capture the tiger.

Later, personnel from the Hunsur Rural Police Station and Forest Department officials visited the spot and conducted an inspection. Forest Department officials stated that an operation is underway, but the tiger has not yet been traced. They said steps are being taken to capture the tiger. Villagers of Nagamangala village have demanded that the tiger be captured in the coming days.

Meanwhile, near Mutturayanahosalli village in Hanagodu Hobli of Hunsur taluk, a tiger was spotted in the border area. Alleging that the Forest Department has not captured the tiger even after two days, villagers blocked the road and staged a protest by setting fire to tyres, and later dispersed.

Dasoha was the Shaivite way of the Sharanas: Poet Jayappa Honnalli

MYSURU

Since Dasoha proclaims social equality, it was regarded by Basava and the Sharanas as the very Shivachara (Shaivite code of conduct). For them, food was not merely a material substance; it was prasada obtained through truthful and pure labour, said poet Dr Jayappa Honnalli, president of Akhila Bharata Sharana Sahithya Parishat, Mysuru Unit.

He was speaking while presiding over a endowment programme held at the JSS Main Students' Hostel in the city, he said it was the Sharanas who transformed food into prasada and endowed it with supreme sanctity. Rejecting the concept of charity (daana), the Sharanas nurtured the practice of Dasoha and fervently prayed to the Almighty, saying, "Do not make me say Soham (I am He), make me say Dasoham (I exist to serve). In charity there is a possibility that the giver assumes a superior position while the receiver is placed in an inferior one. To eliminate this inequality, the Sharanas adopted the system of Dasoha. Kayaka (work) and Dasoha were the two unique principles of Basava and the Sharanas. While Kayaka upheld the dignity of labour, Dasoha crushed social inequalities and proclaimed equality. It erased distinctions of gender as well as differences between the rich and the poor, fostering mutual equality and compassion among people. Even if the earnings from honest labour amounted only to a handful of greens, offering it to the Linga was the firm conviction of the Sharanas. For them, prasada was not merely food; along with being a basic necessity of life, it was also a symbol of an honest and righteous way of living.

N.M. Shivashankar inaugurated the programme by watering a sapling. Kannada professor Ambika Shivananjappa delivered a lecture on food practices as reflected in the Vachanas. Endowment donors Rajeevi Chikkaputtaiah, K.P. Mallikarjuna and Dr. K.N. Mahesh were present.

Mallika Malavalli offered the invocation, while Veena Nandeesh compered the programme. Vice President M.A. Neelambika, Secretary B.N. Nandeeshwar, Treasurer Dr. Muddumallesh, coordinators Dr. H.N. Lokeshappa, members Jagadeesha Chikkamatha, Chennabasappa L.B., B.D.M. Kumar, and hostel wardens were present.

Brahmin forum seeks action against retd judge

MYSURU

Vikram Iyengar, General Secretary of the Mysuru District Brahmin Youth Forum, has demanded stern action against a retired Bombay High Court judge B.J. Kolse Patil for allegedly making derogatory remarks against the Brahmin community.

In a press release, Iyengar said that during a Sufi saints' conference held in Basavakalyan on December 7, Patil made disparaging comments about the Brahmin community. It was highly condemnable that a person who had served as a High Court judge used demeaning, contemptuous, low-level and unconstitutional language, thereby hurting the sentiments of Brahmins. The district administration and the police department to take suo motu cognisance of the matter, register a case, arrest the retired judge and ensure that he is awarded stringent punishment.

Iyengar alleged that Kolse Patil had made baseless statements claiming that Brahmins had enslaved people of other castes, destroyed Hinduism, described Brahmins as "poisonous people" (zahreeli jamaat). He had claimed that Hinduism was not a religion at all but merely a "Brahmin

religion." Such remarks, amounted to sowing seeds of caste hatred, which society strongly condemns. Patil's statements about a community were extremely insulting, hate-filled and capable of creating unrest in society, and therefore deserved strong condemnation.

Stating that the Brahmin community has always upheld peace, harmony and culture, the Brahmin leader said Brahmins have never harboured hatred towards any other community nor used hate speech. Insulting Brahmins for vested interests or to appease certain groups, he said, amounts to an unforgivable offence. By stating that the casteist and hateful remarks made by Kolse Patil had crossed the constitutional limits of freedom of speech, he added.

MP bats for proper growth of heritage city of Mysuru

NEW DELHI

Mysuru–Kodagu Lok Sabha MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar has urged the Ministry of Urban Development to take the initiative in formulating a legal framework that supports the development of heritage cities across the country, including the cultural capital Mysuru.

Speaking during a discussion held in the Parliament session, the MP said that heritage cities of India, including Mysuru, are currently facing several concerns. Uncontrolled and unscientific urbanization has created problems. Therefore, the Ministry of Urban Development must take steps to establish an appropriate legal framework and policy to nurture heritage.

Yaduveer said that effective heritage conservation through private partnership, digital mapping, urban settlements, and preservation of citizenship must be ensured. There is a need to protect our culture, memory, and heritage resources.

Steps initiated to pay food expenses of eligible SC students

MYSURU

State government universities are managing postgraduate institutions with the objective of promoting higher education among students. In connection with Scheduled Caste (SC) students admitted to postgraduate hostels run by universities, the Department of Social Welfare had been directly releasing the food expenses, at rates fixed by the government, to the concerned hostel accounts through the Taluk Panchayat budget head.

However, since this budget head has been discontinued with effect from April 1, 2025, steps have been initiated to bear the food expenses of these students directly through the Department of Social Welfare itself, in consultation with the Finance Department, Joint Director of the Social Welfare Department, Rangegowda, has stated.

Due to lack of information, a letter has been sent

to the Registrar of the University of Mysore stating that the payment of students' food expenses will be made after a decision is taken at the government level.

It has been decided that, in consultation with the Finance Department, all necessary steps will be taken to release food expenses at government-approved rates for all eligible Scheduled Caste students admitted to hostels under all state-run government universities.

Until then, the university will be instructed not to collect the government-prescribed mess charges from eligible Scheduled Caste students admitted to hostels functioning under the jurisdiction of the university, he said in a press release.

Mysuru Karate students shine in national meet

MYSURU

Students of IKA 4K COMBAT Academy, Mysuru, affiliated to IMSKA, India, have bagged prizes in the '32nd National Karate Championship, organized by Hanshi Shivdas N G, 8th Dan Black Belt, WKF & AKF Judge, R C Chairman of AKSKA Karnataka' held at Teresian Indoor Auditorium, Mysuru.

In the photo: (Sitting from left): Leon Sherwin (bronze in kata and kumite), Yohan (gold in kata), Arman Ali (bronze in kata, gold in kumite), Samrat M R (silver in kata, bronze in kumite), Atharva (silver in kata, bronze in kumite), Rohith (silver in kata, gold in kumite), Hrutvik M (gold in kata), Shrikanth (bronze in kata). (Kneeling from left): Ahmed Nihal (bronze in kata), Yashas (silver in kata, bronze in kumite), Ritik Singh (bronze in kata), Mohammed Abdul Malik (Gold in both kata and kumite), Y Navanidh Surya (bronze in kata, silver in kumite).

(Standing from left): Bhagath D (Gold in kata, bronze in kumite), Rahul S (bronze in kata, gold in kumite), [Senpai Tasbiya, Renshi Abdul Waseem, head coach IKA 4K Combat, Senpai Jayanth C, Senpai Pooja S], K Kirthan (bronze in kata and kumite), Pranav Deepak Kumar (bronze in kata).

The dedicated efforts of coaches and instructors - standing behind: Senpai Vismaya, Senpai Chaya Devi, Senpai S Srujan, Senpai Hemanth, and Senpai Vishnu (absentia) played a key role in this success.

Yaduveer urges speedy installation of battery sets for telecom towers

NEW DELHI

Mysuru–Kodagu Lok Sabha Member of Parliament Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar has urged that the process of installing battery sets for telecom towers and allotting 15 power plants in Kodagu district of the Kodagu Lok Sabha constituency be expedited, as there is an urgent need to strengthen telecommunication facilities in the district. Providing this information, Yaduveer Wadiyar said that he met Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in New Delhi and once again submitted a representation in this regard. He said that during the

recent spell of heavy rains in Kodagu district, several telecom poles had collapsed, causing severe inconvenience to the public in establishing communication. In this context, a letter had already been written to the Union Minister seeking enhancement of basic infrastructure. With this in mind, he said he met the Union Minister again today, explained the issue in detail and requested that the process be fast-tracked.

Responding positively, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has assured that the matter will be reviewed at the earliest and appropriate steps will be taken.

Mysuru student selected for national event

MYSURU

Mohammed Ayan bin Abdul Muniyam (a resident of Saraswathipuram, Mysore), a second year student of Gyanaganga Pre-University College in Kuvempunagar, Mysore, has been selected for the national level by winning the first position and gold medal in the Boys Boxing (81-91KG) category in the State

Level Sports Meet 2025-26 of the School Education Department (Pre-Graduate) held in Shivamogga. He was congratulated by . Nagamma, Mysore District Deputy Director, School Education Department (Pre-Graduate), Sudhir H.B., Principal, the college management and staff.

From Field to Feast: Traditional Flavours Take Centre Stage at Nanjaraj Bahadur Choultry

MYSURU

Amid the pleasant chill of winter, the aroma of freshly cooked avarekai dishes filled the air as the two-day Maagi Sambhrama began at Nanjaraj Bahadur Chhatra in Mysuru, turning the venue into a vibrant celebration of seasonal harvests, native foods and rural livelihoods.

Organised jointly by Sahaja Samrudha and Sahaja Seeds, the fair was inaugurated by Dr. Shivaprasad Huded, Vice Principal of JSS Ayurveda Medical College. "Traditional foods and native crops are not just about taste; they are about health, sustainability and farmers' dignity," he said while inaugurating the mela.

Freshly harvested produce such as avarekai (field bean),

togari beans, fresh groundnuts, purple yam, red-husk sorghum, climbing potatoes and other winter crops are on vibrant display, drawing food lovers and farmers alike.

Different varieties of avarekai—chinugalu, dabbe, kempu, mani and hittala—have arrived from H.D. Kote, Periyapatna, Tumakuru, Dharwad and Bengaluru districts. Shelled avarekai is also available in plenty. Food stalls have become a major attraction, serving favourites like avarekai uppittu, avarekai dosa, mudde with avarekai sambar, avarekai bath and even avarekai jamun. North Karnataka flavours shine through with jowar roti and pulse-based side dishes.

The Devadhanya Farmer Producer Company has brought an array of millets, pulses and traditional rice varieties such as Doddiga Kempakki and Uduro Sali. A colourful exhibition of gourds in various shapes and sizes is delighting visitors, while Krushikala's artistic gourd crafts and Christmas dolls add a festive touch.

"This mela connects consumers directly with farmers and native seeds," said Manju K.S., organiser of the event. "It is a space where food, culture and sustainability meet."

Beru Naturals has introduced sesame laddus and vermicelli, while women's self-help groups from Dharwad are selling Byadagi chilli powder and traditional spice mixes. Juices made from neglected fruits like bael and tamarind are also finding eager buyers.

The Desi Seed Producer Company of Mysuru and Hulikadu Farmer Producer Company have brought winter vegetable seeds, tubers, ragi, native pigeon pea and daily-use rice varieties, with brisk sales reported for tree pigeon pea and beetroot tubers.

Millets, organic products, value-added foods, cosmetic enhancers, bamboo products and even monkey-repellent guns complete the diverse offerings, making Maagi Sambhrama a true celebration of rural ingenuity and seasonal abundance.

Contact: Manju K.S. – 9535149520

Six-Hour Delhi Trip, Five-Year Question: Is a Change of Guard Imminent?

SHYAM SUNDAR VATTAM
MYSURU

Even as the Congress leadership attempted to project unity ahead of the winter session in Belagavi, the simmering power struggle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy D.K. Shivakumar has erupted once again, threatening to overshadow governance and legislative priorities.

Siddaramaiah's sudden decision to air dash to New Delhi on Sunday has added a dramatic twist to an already volatile political situation, fuelling speculation about an imminent showdown with the party high command.

The uneasy calm that followed the separate breakfast meetings hosted by Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar in Bengaluru last week was short-lived. Those meetings, carefully choreographed to signal a truce and party discipline ahead of the Belagavi session, were meant to reassure both legislators and the public that internal differences would not derail the government. However, Dr. Yatindra Siddaramaiah, MLC and son of the Chief Minister, reignited the controversy by asserting unequivocally that his father would complete a full five-year term till 2028.

That statement proved to be the spark in dry political tinder. Supporters of Shivakumar reacted sharply, declaring that their leader would take oath as Chief Minister after the Belagavi session. What followed was a visible mobilisation on both sides, with Shivakumar's camp reportedly holding a discreet meeting of around 40 MLAs and ministers to chalk out strategy, signalling that the Deputy CM's supporters are no longer content with silence or symbolism.

Yatindra's repeated public assertions that Siddaramaiah would remain CM till 2028, seemingly without regard for political fallout, further deepened the divide. As a result, the winter capital of Belagavi, meant to host serious discussions on North Karnataka's long-pending issues, turned into a theatre of political manoeuvring. The winter chill did little to cool tempers, as both camps became hyperactive, prioritising power equations over policy debates.

Against this backdrop, Siddaramaiah's sudden six-to-seven-hour visit to New Delhi has taken centre stage. The Chief Minister is expected to meet senior Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge, and Karnataka in-charge K.C. Venugopal. Officially, the visit is to brief the high command about developments over the past week, including the alleged secret meeting of Shivakumar loyalists. Politically, however, it is widely seen as an assertive move—either to convey that Siddaramaiah has no intention of stepping down, or to place firm conditions before any leadership transition.

The Congress high command finds itself in a delicate bind. With Parliament in session and the party focused on countering the NDA at the national level, taking a swift decision on Karnataka is neither easy nor convenient. Yet, Siddaramaiah's solo dash to Delhi—especially when both leaders were earlier expected to go together after the Belagavi session—has sent ripples across the state's political landscape.

Whether this visit strengthens Siddaramaiah's hand or accelerates a leadership change remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that the Congress's biggest challenge in Karnataka is no longer the opposition, but managing its own ambitions without letting governance become collateral damage.

CM Siddaramaiah is not anti-Brahmin: Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao

MYSURU

Claiming that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is not anti-brahmin, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said the Brahmin Development Board would not have been constituted if the CM had reservation against the Brahmin community.

Speaking at a function organised by Karnataka State Brahmins Development Board to honour the meritorious Brahmin youths and the distribution of loans to the beneficiaries here on Saturday, he blamed some vested interests for accusing the incumbent government of practicing the appeasement politics to favour a particular community. In fact, the Congress always believed in inclusive growth and never hated any caste or community for political reasons.

Dinesh said it was not correct for any government to appease any particular caste, community or religion, and blame others as it would send a wrong message to the society. Such a policy of any government must be condemned in the strongest words. The present Congress government believed in the welfare of one and all and never differentiated. In fact, the proposal to set up the board for the uplift of the Brahmin community was raised in one of the functions in Mysore which was attended by Siddaramaiah and he readily agreed to constitute the board for the welfare of the Brahmins. Secularism means not favoring a community but hate others. But that has been practiced by the BJP by painting all the Muslims as terrorists. Like other religions, a small percentage of the population may be bad and such elements must be punished as per law.

The minister claimed that if the Congress government was anti-Hindu it would not have raised the tastik for the priests in several hundreds of temples and released the funds for their development. The current Muzzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy has taken up several welfare measures for the betterment of the priests in the Government controlled Muzzrai temples and their families. These measures would not have been done if the government was against the Brahmin community. Like other communities, there are problems even in the Brahmin community which would be addressed in a phased manner. The government had released a grant of Rs 10 crore for the Brahmins Development Board and the CM would be requested to increase the allocation in the next budget. This is just the beginning and the government has plans to extend the financial help to those Brahmins who are in other fields such as astrology and bakery. The board had been working well under the leadership of its chairman A Narasimha. Recently, the government released Rs 50 lakhs to the Brahmana Sabha in Mandya and Rs 1.5 crore to the Brahmin association of Belagavi. This would prove wrong if the opposition parties claim that the state treasury is empty due to the implementation of five guarantees that have uplifted the financial status of all the communities.

Dr Sujata Srinivasa Rao, H.V.Rajeev, Vikram Iyengar and other dignitaries were present.

Puppet Festival 2025 from Dec 16

MYSURU

The City of Mysuru will turn into a vibrant hub of puppetry as the Puppet Festival 2025 is scheduled to be held from December 16 to 21 at the Indian Institute of Educational Theatre (IIET), located on the Hardwick School campus, J.L.B. Road in Mysuru.

The festival will feature a puppetry workshop from December 16 to 20, puppet shows from December 19 to 21, and a seminar on December 21, bringing together renowned puppeteers, theatre professionals and enthusiasts from across the country.

The puppetry workshop will be inaugurated on December 16 at 11 am by G.K. Jayaram, author and Founder and Managing Director of ILID. Renowned production and puppet designer Shashidhar Adapa will also take part. The programme will be presided over by Rameshwari Verma, along with senior stage directors and actors.

The Puppet Festival 2025 will be formally inaugurated on December 19 at 6 pm by K.M. Gayatri, Director, Department of Kannada and Culture, Bengaluru. Indira Nair will be the chief guest, in the presence of senior theatre directors and actors.

The valedictory of the puppetry workshop will be held on December 20 at 4 pm, with Monnanda Appayya, Managing Director, Weinberger India, as the guest of honour. The festival will conclude on December 21 at 6 pm, with R. Guru, philanthropist and industrialist from N. Ranga Rao & Sons, Mysore, gracing the closing ceremony as the guest of honour.

Renowned teams participating in the festival include Burdwan the Puppeteers from West Bengal, Talking Turtles from Hyderabad, Rangaputali Puppeteers, Mobile Theatre, Gagan and Team from Bengaluru, and Peupati from Kerala.

This year, the organisers have expanded the festival's outreach by taking puppetry into schools, enabling more children to experience the magic of the art form.

Puppet performances were held in collaboration with Hardwick School, Arivu Vidya Samsthe (Lingambudhi Palya), Pramati Hill View Academy (Kuvempunagar), Phoenix International Academy (KRS Road), Vidyavardhaka Sangha (Kuvempunagar), Morarji Desai Residential School (Doddahundi), Vanitha Sadana (Krishnamurthypuram), Hari Vidyalaya (Bogadi) and Bachchan Play School, all in Mysore.

The festival promises to be a colourful celebration of traditional and contemporary puppetry, engaging audiences of all ages.

Saffron Surge Marks Hanuman Jayanti in Heritage Mysuru

MYSURU

Mysuru witnessed a spectacular outpouring of devotion and colour on Saturday as Hanuman Jayanti was celebrated with grandeur, discipline and fervour across the city.

From early morning, the heritage city donned a festive hue, with large saffron flags bearing the image of Lord Hanuman fluttering proudly atop buildings, shops and vehicles, transforming several localities into a sea of devotional saffron.

The highlight of the celebrations was the majestic procession that commenced from the historic Sri Kote Anjaneya Swamy Temple, located adjacent to the iconic Mysore Palace. As the procession moved through the main thoroughfares of the city, beautifully adorned idols of Lord Hanuman, Sri Rama, Lord Krishna and other deities were carried with reverence, drawing thousands of devotees onto the streets.

The air was charged with spirituality as resounding "Jai Hanuman" slogans rent the atmosphere, while melodious shlokas praising the valour and devotion of Lord Hanuman played continuously through loudspeakers, creating a deeply devotional ambience. Devotees, young and old, walked alongside the procession with folded hands, many wearing saffron scarves and headbands, visibly moved by the occasion.

Tight security

Given the scale of the event, the city police had put in place elaborate security arrangements to ensure peaceful conduct of the celebrations. As a precautionary measure, Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) personnel were stationed near mosques and sensitive points along the procession route. Senior police officers were present on the ground, personally supervising the arrangements.

Their meticulous planning paid off, as the procession concluded without any untoward incident, prompting the police to heave a collective sigh of relief.

To instil confidence among residents and traders, the police had also conducted a route march on Friday, covering the entire procession path. This proactive step helped reassure the public and contributed significantly to the calm and orderly atmosphere witnessed on Saturday.

Adding to the significance of the event, Chamundeshwari MLA G.T. Devegowda, former MP Pratap Simha, along with several leaders from the BJP and JDS, participated in the procession, walking alongside devotees and offering prayers. In a gesture of community spirit and devotion, prasada was distributed generously to all, with volunteers ensuring that no devotee went unattended. By evening, as the procession dispersed and normalcy returned, Mysuru stood as a glowing example of faith celebrated with harmony, discipline and devotion, making this Hanuman Jayanti a truly memorable one for the palace city.

QUICK READ

Bengaluru Metro tickets now available on Uber

BENGALURU

Bengaluru commuters can now buy Namma Metro tickets directly through the Uber app, making travel smoother and reducing long queues at stations. The app allows UPI payments and provides real-time metro updates to help plan journeys efficiently. In addition, Uber has launched Uber Direct in the city, offering businesses a ready-made logistics solution for deliveries, starting with groceries. Drivers can earn extra income through this service. Looking ahead, Uber may introduce its shared commute service, Uber Shuttle. Meanwhile, BMRCL plans to increase train frequency across corridors, reducing wait times and improving public transport convenience in the city.

Bitter cold sweeps North Karnataka, orange alert issued

BENGALURU

North Karnataka is experiencing a sharp drop in temperatures, prompting an orange alert in districts including Bidar, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Vijayapura, Raichur, Bagalkot, Belgaum, Dharwad, and Gadag. The Meteorological Department reported temperatures as low as 9°C in Bidar and Dharwad, 10°C in Vijayapura and Raichur, and 11–12°C in several other areas. Northeasterly winds carrying cold, dry air are causing chilly nights and morning fog. Residents are advised to take precautions, especially the elderly.

BESCOM worker arrested in Rs 6.5 lakh toy gun robbery

BENGALURU

A BESCOM contract worker, 36-year-old Narayanamurthy from Horamavu, was arrested for allegedly robbing two Mysuru-based finance firm employees of Rs 6.5 lakh using a toy gun. On December 10, Yogesh and Ramalinga, collecting gold and cash from clients, were lured near a bank branch by Narayanamurthy, who claimed he wanted to hand over pledged gold. Narayanamurthy and two accomplices threatened them at gunpoint, assaulted Yogesh, and snatched Rs 4 lakh and Rs 2.5 lakh from the duo before fleeing. Police recovered Rs 4 lakh from Narayanamurthy and are searching for the remaining suspects.

K'taka launches emergency response vehicles initiative

Each ₹7.22 lakh Ashok Leyland DOST XL HSD vehicle, BS-VI compliant, ensures efficient, safe, and rapid accident site operations

BENGALURU

Karnataka has launched "Accident Emergency Response Vehicles" to provide swift assistance during road accidents and bus breakdowns. The initiative was flagged off on Saturday by Transport and Muzrai Minister Sri Ramalinga Reddy, aiming to reduce public inconvenience and ensure quick support for drivers, conductors, and passengers.

The new vehicles will function as mobile workshops, equipped with spare parts and necessary tools to repair buses immediately at accident or breakdown sites. Two vehicles have already been deployed at Bengaluru and Mysuru central locations, covering nearby districts including Tumakuru, Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Mandya, and surrounding areas. By the end of January 2026, an additional 10 vehicles will be introduced across other districts in a phased manner.

These vehicles will assist buses operating from Kempegowda Bus Stand and Mysuru Road Bus Stand, which serve multiple destinations within the state and interstate routes. They are designed to resolve traffic congestion caused by bus breakdowns and provide emergency help, including shifting injured persons to the nearest hospital.

Each vehicle, costing ₹7.22 lakh, is an Ashok Leyland DOST XL High Side Deck (HSD) model with BS-VI emission standards. It features a turbocharged diesel engine, high fuel efficiency, and a high side deck for safe transport of materials. These specifications ensure that technical teams can reach accident sites quickly and operate efficiently.

The launch was attended by top officials, including Shri Bharamagouda Alagouda Kage, Chairman of NWKRTC; Shri Arun Kumar M. Y. Patil, KKRTC; Shri V. S. Aradhya, BMTC; Shri Mohammed Rizwan Nawab, Vice-Chairman KSRTC; Shri Niketh Raj M., Vice-Chairman BMTC; and several Managing Directors of state transport corporations. Staff and officers praised the initiative, highlighting that these mobile workshops will significantly improve public safety and reduce inconvenience caused by unexpected breakdowns.

Officials stressed that collaborative efforts between transport authorities and technical teams are crucial to ensuring smooth and safe bus operations across Karnataka.

Karnataka invites tenders for second airport

Minister Patil stated firms with five prior projects and ₹250 crore annual works can apply; study will assess environment, approvals, land, and airport impacts on tourism and industry.

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has invited tenders to select a consultancy firm to prepare a technical and economic feasibility report for a proposed second international airport near Bengaluru, Infrastructure Development Minister M.B. Patil announced today. The last date for applications is January 12, 2026.

The State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation will oversee the selection of the firm, which will conduct a detailed study of three potential sites: Choodahalli, Somanahalli, and Nelamangala along Kanakapura Road. A preliminary inspection by a high-level team from the Airports Authority of India has already been completed. The selected firm is expected to submit a comprehensive report within five months.

Minister Patil said that firms with at least five prior consultancy projects in the sector and annual works worth Rs. 250 crore in the past five years are eligible to apply. The study will examine rainfall, topography, electricity, water, sewage, waste management, noise, pollution, surrounding population, and development potential. It will also analyze land requirements, necessary approvals from the Ministry of Defence and DGCA, and the airport's impact on tourism, industry, and passenger movement.

The consultancy will also evaluate existing transport connections, infrastructure development needs, freight and passenger services, and overall economic viability. The final recommendation will identify the most suitable location among the three sites.

Patil emphasized the urgency of the project, noting that Kempegowda International Airport is currently the second busiest in India, and a new airport will be necessary by 2033. "New Delhi and Mumbai already have two airports. Bengaluru needs to prepare for the future," he said, adding that decisions on construction will follow once the feasibility report is completed.

Officials noted that this initiative is part of Karnataka's long-term plan to improve infrastructure, boost economic growth, and accommodate increasing passenger and freight traffic in the coming decade.

UG NEET stray vacancy registration deadline extended

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has extended the deadline for registering preferences in the stray vacancy round for medical and dental courses until December 15, KEA Executive Director H. Prasanna announced.

Students wishing to participate must first pay the course fee online using the bank account details provided on the KEA website. After payment, the payment receipt and CET number should be emailed to keavikasana@gmail.com or submitted in person at the KEA office. Only then will students be allowed to register their options.

The provisional seat allocation result for the stray vacancy round will be declared on December 15 after 4 pm. The update aims to help students who were allotted seats in the third round but have not yet reported to their colleges. KEA has published a list of such students online and reminded them to complete admission by December 14.

Students failing to report within the given period must appear in person at the KEA office at 9 am on December 15 to provide valid reasons. Seats vacated by these students will be included in the stray vacancy round, allowing other eligible candidates a chance to secure admission.

City police appreciated citizens' cooperation in clearing dues, attributing higher collections to awareness and convenient digital payment platforms

Bengaluru traffic fine rebate nets ₹27 crore in 22 days

BENGALURU

The city's traffic department has collected nearly ₹27 crore as motorists rushed to take advantage of a 50 per cent rebate on pending traffic fines. The scheme, launched on November 21 and running until December 12, 2025, encouraged vehicle owners to pay only half of their accumulated penalties, helping clear a massive backlog of unpaid fines.

During the 22-day campaign, around 9.5 lakh traffic violations were settled across Bengaluru, with a single day—December 12—seeing ₹4.53 crore paid for 1.56 lakh challans. Officials said the scheme eased the financial burden on citizens while improving compliance and reducing pending cases.

City police expressed appreciation for the public's cooperation, highlighting how citizens voluntarily cleared dues, demonstrating responsibility and accountability. They also credited the higher collections to improved awareness and convenient digital payment platforms, including the KSP app, BTP ASTraM app, Karnataka One, Bangalore One, and various walk-in centres.

The current collection of ₹26.97 crore is a significant increase compared to ₹5.6 crore raised during a similar 2023 drive. Earlier this year, a 50 per cent rebate between August 21 and September 12 saw an even larger response, with ₹95.77 crore collected and over 34 lakh challans cleared. Several prominent leaders also participated in the campaign. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah paid ₹2,500 to settle seven traffic violations linked to official vehicles, while BJP state president B Y Vijayendra cleared ten cases by paying ₹3,250.

The traffic department said the success of the scheme highlights the importance of public cooperation and responsible civic behavior. Authorities urged citizens to continue following traffic rules to maintain safety on Bengaluru's busy roads.

Alternative route opened to ease traffic in Kempegowda Layout

KENGERI

Motorists in Kempegowda Layout now have an alternative route to avoid traffic congestion caused by ongoing railway underpass construction near Ramo Halli Cross on Dodda Ala Mara Connection Road, officials said.

Traffic had increased significantly on Bhimana Kuppe village road due to vehicles diverting from the Bangalore-Mysore Road, creating noise pollution and inconvenience for local residents.

Following requests from citizens to the MLA, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) acted promptly to provide a solution.

BDA Executive Engineer Ashok confirmed that, under the guidance of MLA S.T. Somashekar, a new road in Kempegowda Layout has been repaired to serve as an alternative route. Vehicles coming from the Challagaghatta route can now move through Bhimana Kuppe to reach Kempegowda Layout, ensuring smoother traffic flow and reducing disruption for local residents.

Former president of Ramo Halli Gram Panchayat B.H. Prabhu explained that the alternative route would ease congestion while construction continues on the underpass. Local leaders Narahari, Rangaanath, Renukappa, and Naganna were also present during the inspection and announcement.

The initiative aims to balance the needs of commuters with the concerns of villagers, providing a practical solution to traffic challenges while infrastructure improvements continue in the area.

Authorities assured that all necessary measures are being taken for smooth movement of vehicles.

Workshop highlights smart agriculture technologies

KENGERI : India's agricultural landscape is gradually shrinking under the pressures of globalization, but technology is helping farmers stay productive, said Dr. S. Rama Subramaniam, scientist at the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). Dr. Subramaniam spoke at the inauguration of the "IC-AISMART 2025" workshop on "Agrivoltaics Innovations," organized by the Bangalore Electronics and Communication Engineering Department JSS-ATEB STEP at JSS Technical Education Academy College on Kengeri-Uttarahalli Main Road. He emphasized that digital tools and data are increasingly transforming agriculture, from crop management to marketing, helping farmers boost yield and achieve financial stability."Digitalization in agriculture enables precise information collection and informed decisions, which can improve productivity and farmers' livelihoods," he added. Joining virtually, Dr. Vinod Rajamani, Professor at North Rhine University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Dortmund, Germany, highlighted the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture. "AI can detect pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables and optimize water, nutrient, and fertilizer use at the right time. This technology will be crucial for farmers' future success," he said. The workshop drew attention to the integration of renewable energy, machine learning, and embedded technologies into farming practices, aiming to modernize agriculture while sustaining resources.Senior scientist Dr. B. N. Gnanesh, General Manager of Railte Corporation of India Limited Kumar Kalyan Sundaram, Welfare Officer and Dean Dr. Mahesh Kumar, HOD S. T. Veerabhadrappa, Dr. S. Mallikarjuna Swamy, Dr. Mahendra, M. N. Basavaraju, and numerous students attended the workshop. Experts stressed that blending technology with traditional farming practices could help Indian farmers face challenges of land reduction, climate change, and global competition while ensuring food security and economic growth.

STEP TOWARDS CLEANLINESS

Citizens celebrate Green Footpath Walk

BENGALURU

Yelahanka witnessed the sixth Footpath Walk under Project Vakalur today, organized jointly by Uttara Nagar Palika, The Ugly Indian, and a local civic group. The initiative aimed to promote clean, obstacle-free footpaths and encourage pedestrian-friendly spaces across the city.

More than 100 participants joined the 10 km walk, including the Honorable MLA of Yelahanka Assembly Constituency Shri R. Vishwanath, Commissioner of Bangalore North Municipal Corporation Shri Pommala Sunil Kumar, municipal officers, staff, and residents of all age groups. The walk started at Seshadripuram College on Doddaballapur Main Road and passed through Radial 1st A Main Road, 16th B Cross, and Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan Road. The primary goal of the campaign was to allow citizens to walk without fear or obstacles. Participants were asked to note any barriers such as broken slabs, encroachments, or litter, and report them to the authorities for immediate action.

Over 100 citizens joined the sixth Project Vakalur Footpath Walk in Yelahanka, covering 10 km of clean, wide footpaths. Only six minor obstacles were found, reflecting effective civic coordination. Officials and residents praised the safe, pedestrian-friendly experience.

During the walk, six minor obstacles were recorded over the 10 km route. These included one two-wheeler and one car blocking the path, one petrol station encroachment, one BESCOM-related obstacle, and two unauthorized plex buntings. Notably, no garbage piles, open urination spots, broken slabs, or shops obstructed the walk. Footpaths were wide, clean, and comfortable for pedestrians.

Commissioner Sunil Kumar Pommala praised the joint efforts of citizens, The Ugly Indian team, and municipal staff, highlighting that collaboration is key to building a cleaner, more people-friendly Bengaluru. Project Vakalur Coordinator Arun Pai emphasized that long-term improvements are possible when citizens actively cooperate with local authorities.

Participants provided positive feedback, rating the route as satisfactory and appreciating the smooth, safe walking experience. The event reinforced the importance of civic participation in maintaining public spaces and encouraged residents to continue reporting obstacles for prompt resolution.

Such initiatives aim to create sustainable pedestrian-friendly roads, ensuring citizens can walk safely and comfortably in all parts of Bengaluru.

QUICK READ

Gram Sabha meeting held amid officials' absence

Devanahalli

Members of the Channarayapatna Gram Panchayat in Devanahalli taluk expressed strong displeasure over the absence of several government officials during a Gram Sabha meeting held at the Panchayat premises. Panchayat members questioned the purpose of conducting a Gram Sabha when only a few officials were present, stating that such meetings lose their significance without the participation of responsible department officers.

They alleged that despite prior intimation, many officials failed to attend, preventing villagers from receiving proper responses to their grievances. During the meeting, members of the public urged Panchayat officials to address long-pending civic and development-related issues.

DCM assures Cauvery water supply for Bengaluru Rural

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar assured priority for Cauvery water, Yettinahole project and Metro connectivity to Bengaluru Rural

DEVANAHALLI

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar assured that top priority would be given to providing Cauvery drinking water, Yettinahole project water, and Metro rail connectivity to Bengaluru Rural district. He was speaking after inaugurating the newly constructed office building of the Bengaluru International Airport Area Planning Authority (BIAAPA) at Ambika Layout on Sulibele Road in Devanahalli town.

The new BIAAPA office building has been constructed at an estimated cost of ₹6.45 crore by the Public Works Department and the Urban Development Department, Bengaluru Rural district. Inaugurating the facility, Shivakumar said the government is committed to ensuring balanced development in areas surrounding Bengaluru, especially fast-growing regions like Devanahalli.

Referring to water supply issues, the Deputy CM said Bengaluru Rural district incharge Minister K.H. Muniyappa has been consistently pressing for improved drinking water supply. Minister Muniyappa has been demanding that Yettinahole and Cauvery water must be provided to this region. He raises the issue in every Cabinet meeting, and we will fulfil this demand, Shivakumar said.

He also recalled that after taking charge as Irrigation Minister earlier, he had issued a new government order earmarking six TMC of water exclusively for Bengaluru city. Stressing the importance of long-term planning, he said drinking water projects must be prioritised to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population.

Sharing his role in the airport project, Shivakumar said that during his tenure as Urban Development Minister between 2002 and 2004, he had signed the file to establish the Airport Area Planning Authority. At that time, there was a debate on whether the airport should come up in Bidadi or Devanahalli. Leaders like Muninarasimhaiah, Ramaiah and Bacche Gowda convinced farmers and ensured that the airport was built in Devanahalli, he recalled. He noted that 2,400 acres of land were acquired for the airport and that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was invited for the groundbreaking ceremony at Vidhana Soudha.

DKS to become CM on January 6, claims MLA Iqbal Hussain

Ramanagara MLA Iqbal Hussain claimed that the Deputy Chief Minister will assume charge as Chief Minister on January 6

RAMANAGARA

Congress MLA Iqbal Hussain claimed that the Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka would take over as the State's Chief Minister on January 6. He made the statement while speaking to reporters in Ramanagara, triggering fresh political speculation and debate within the State's political circles.

Iqbal Hussain asserted that discussions within the party indicate a leadership transition at the top level of the State government early next year. On January 6, the Deputy Chief Minister will become the Chief Minister of the State, he said, expressing confidence in his claim. However, he did not provide further details on the circumstances or official confirmation surrounding the alleged change.

The MLA's remarks have sparked widespread discussion, especially amid ongoing speculation about power-sharing arrangements within the ruling Congress party in Karnataka. While party leaders at the State level have repeatedly stated that there is no immediate plan for a leadership change, statements such as these have continued to fuel political chatter.

Iqbal Hussain maintained that the leadership transition would be smooth and in the best interests of the State. He said the Congress government remains united and focused on governance, welfare schemes, and development, regardless of speculation. According to him, the party leadership at the national level is fully aware of developments in the State.

Political observers note that such statements often emerge during periods of internal discussion within parties but stress that any decision regarding a change in the Chief Minister would be taken by the party high command. So far, there has been no official response from the Deputy Chief Minister, the Chief Minister, or the Congress leadership to the claim made by the Ramanagara MLA.

The opposition parties were quick to react, accusing the ruling party of instability and internal power struggles. They alleged that repeated statements about leadership change create uncertainty and distract the government from focusing on administrative responsibilities.

MLA Puttannaiah visits villages affected by mining activities

CHITRADURGA

Melukote MLA Darshan Puttannaiah visited villages affected by mining activities near Bhimasamudra in Chitradurga district and held on-the-spot inspections to understand the hardships faced by local residents. The visit comes amid growing complaints from villagers about the adverse impact of mining companies operating in and around the area.

During his visit, the legislator interacted extensively with residents of Bhimasamudra village and neighbouring habitations, who have been reportedly suffering due to mining-related issues for a prolonged period. Villagers raised concerns about environmental degradation, damage to agricultural land, dust pollution, and the impact on groundwater sources. They also complained about heavy vehicle movement linked to mining operations, which they said has damaged village roads and posed safety risks.

Darshan Puttannaiah patiently listened to the grievances of the affected families and sought details about the functioning of the mining companies in the region. He inspected areas close to mining sites and observed the conditions firsthand, taking note of the alleged violations and the scale of disruption to daily life.

Residents informed the MLA that continuous mining activities have led to cracks in houses, reduced crop yield, and health problems due to dust and noise pollution. They urged him to intervene and ensure that strict regulations are enforced on mining companies to safeguard the interests of villagers.

Responding to the concerns, Darshan Puttannaiah assured the villagers that their problems would be raised at the appropriate forums. He said that while development and industrial activity are important, they should not come at the cost of people's livelihoods and environmental safety. The MLA stressed that mining companies must operate strictly within the framework of the law and adhere to environmental norms.

He further stated that he would bring the issues to the attention of district authorities and concerned departments, seeking immediate measures to mitigate the impact on affected villages.

Tumakuru police successfully cracked several criminal cases, arresting accused persons and recovering stolen property during investigations

Police down crack multiple criminal cases, recover arrests

TUMAKURU

The Tumakuru district police have achieved a major breakthrough by successfully solving several criminal cases reported across the city and surrounding areas. Through systematic investigation, intelligence gathering, and coordinated operations, the police have arrested multiple accused persons and recovered stolen property, officials said on Saturday.

Addressing the media, senior police officials said the solved cases include theft, burglary, robbery, and other criminal activities that had caused concern among residents in recent weeks. The police credited the success to continuous monitoring, swift response to complaints, and the effective use of technical and human intelligence.

According to officials, special teams were formed to investigate the pending cases. These teams analysed CCTV footage, tracked mobile phone data, and questioned suspects to piece together the sequence of crimes. As a result, several accused were identified and taken into custody. The police also recovered cash, gold ornaments, vehicles, and other valuables allegedly stolen during the commission of the crimes.

Police said that some of the accused were involved in multiple offences and were operating in an organised manner. With their arrest, officials believe a significant criminal network has been dismantled, which is expected to bring down crime rates in the district.

Senior officers appreciated the efforts of investigating officers and field staff, stating that their dedication and teamwork played a key role in cracking the cases. They also warned criminals that strict action would be taken against those involved in unlawful activities.

The Tumakuru police urged citizens to remain vigilant and cooperate with law enforcement by promptly reporting suspicious activities. They also advised people to install CCTV cameras, secure their homes and businesses properly, and follow basic safety measures to prevent crime.

Leopard cub spotted at police quarters, forest officials rescue

GUDIBANDE

Panic prevailed in parts of Gudibande after a leopard cub was spotted within the police accommodation area at Patna, triggering fear among residents for several hours. The incident came to light after locals noticed the presence of the wild animal and shared images on social media, leading to widespread concern. According to local sources, the leopard cub was seen moving around the premises of the police shelter, alarming residents and police personnel living in the area. Soon after the sighting, a photograph of the cub inside the police quarters began circulating widely on WhatsApp and other social media platforms, further heightening anxiety among the public.

DHO responds to delay in inauguration of community health centre

CHITRADURGA

The long-awaited inauguration of the Doddahullarthi Community Health Centre has been delayed, prompting concerns among local residents. Addressing the issue, District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Renuprasad responded to the matter during a media interaction in Chitradurga on Saturday afternoon at around 1 pm.

Clarifying the situation, Dr. Renuprasad stated that the Doddahullarthi Primary Health Centre has already been officially upgraded to a Community Health Centre (CHC). He noted that a well-equipped new building has been completed as part of the upgradation process, marking a significant improvement in healthcare infrastructure for the region.

However, he explained that the inauguration has been delayed due to administrative and operational requirements. The infrastructure is ready, but the appointment of specialist doctors is still pending. The recruitment process for specialists will be completed shortly, the DHO said. He added that the availability of qualified medical professionals is essential before formally inaugurating and operationalising the centre.

Dr. Renuprasad also pointed out that the inauguration date needs to be finalised in coordination with the local MLA. Discussions have already been held with the concerned legislator regarding the scheduling of the inauguration. Once a suitable date is fixed, the hospital will be inaugurated without further delay, he assured.

He emphasised that the health department is committed to ensuring that the facility becomes fully functional with adequate staff and services, rather than rushing the inauguration without proper preparedness.

Human skull found govt hospital premises

NELAMANGALA

Panic and confusion prevailed at the Nelamangala public government hospital after a human skull was discovered within the hospital premises. The startling find came at a time when investigations related to the Dharamsthala skull case are still underway, adding to the anxiety among hospital staff and the public. According to sources, the skull was found in a garbage dumping area inside the hospital compound. Doctors, patients, and attendants who noticed the skull were reportedly shocked and alarmed by the discovery. Hospital authorities were immediately alerted, following which the police were informed. Preliminary observations suggest that the skull could be four to five years old.

NAME CHANGE

I, **SMITHA SHRINATH BHAT**, W/o. Shrinath Dattatraya Bhat, resident of No. S-1, Milan Ganga Apt., 17th Cross, 36th Main, 6th Phase, J. P. Nagar, Bangalore 560076, have changed my name to **SMITHA SHRINATH**, vide affidavit dated: 11.12.2025, before Notary YANKOBA, Bangalore

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BANJARA BHAVAN INAUGURATED

HM inaugurates new Banjara Bhavan building in Tumakuru

TUMAKURU

Home Minister and district incharge Minister G. Parameshwara inaugurated the newly constructed District Banjara Bhavan building in Tumakuru city, marking a significant step towards the welfare and empowerment of the Banjara community. The inauguration ceremony was held in the presence of community leaders, elected representatives, and senior officials.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Parameshwara said that Banjara Bhavans serve as important cultural and social centres, providing space for community activities, meetings, and programmes aimed at social upliftment. He emphasised that the government is committed to inclusive development and ensuring that all communities receive equal opportunities and institutional support.

The Minister noted that the construction of the District Banjara Bhavan reflects the government's focus on preserving cultural identity while promoting education, awareness, and unity among communities. Such buildings are not merely structures but symbols of dignity and recognition for communities that have contributed significantly to society, he said.

Parameshwara added that the State government has implemented several welfare schemes for marginalised and backward communities, including housing, education, skill development, and livelihood programmes. He urged members of the Banjara community to make effective use of the facility for cultural, educational, and social initiatives that would benefit future generations.

Local leaders welcomed the inauguration, stating that the Banjara Bhavan would act as a hub for community engagement and a platform to address social issues. They expressed gratitude to the government for fulfilling a long-pending demand and providing a permanent facility for district-level activities.

Officials informed that the building has been equipped with basic amenities to host meetings, cultural events, and awareness programmes. The facility is expected to strengthen coordination among community members across the district and promote collective progress.

QUICK READ

Seven Arrested For Stealing Brass Temple Bells

Bulandshahr

Uttar Pradesh Police arrested seven people for stealing brass bells from temples and recovered over 100 stolen bells along with illegal weapons. Two gang members, Hammu and Taj Mohammad, were caught on Thursday, while Sagir, Nazim, Dildar, Rajuddin, and Ali were arrested on Saturday. The gang had been involved in multiple temple bell thefts across Bulandshahr. Police also reported similar thefts in nearby Hathras and Aligarh districts, investigating the full extent of the crimes.

Infant Dies As Oxygen in Ambulance Runs Out

Jaipur

A one-day-old infant died in an ambulance while being taken to SMS Hospital after the oxygen cylinder ran out, police said. The child was referred from Bayana hospital in Bharatpur, and the father claimed the ambulance driver abandoned them at Bassi government hospital. No nursing staff were present, and the father was operating the oxygen. Doctors at Bassi declared the infant dead. Police are investigating the circumstances of the tragic incident.

Delhi Air Quality Nears Severe Pollution Level

New Delhi

Delhi woke up under heavy smog on Saturday, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) at 397, close to the 'severe' category. CPCB data showed 21 monitoring stations crossed 400 AQI, with Wazirpur at 445, Vivek Vihar 444, and Jahangirpuri 442. Other areas like Anand Vihar, Ashok Vihar, Rohini, and Chandni Chowk also recorded dangerously high levels. The Air Quality Early Warning System predicted conditions could worsen, entering the 'severe' category by Sunday. Residents are advised to take precautions.

Congress Criticizes India's Exclusion From US Silicon Alliance

India has been left out of the new US-led global silicon supply chain initiative

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday expressed concern over India's exclusion from the nine-nation Pax Silica alliance, describing it as a missed strategic opportunity. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said it would have benefited India to be part of the grouping, which aims to reduce Chinese dominance in high-tech supply chains. The alliance includes the United States, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Israel,

the United Arab Emirates, and Australia, with India being the only QUAD member left out.

Ramesh linked India's exclusion to a "sharp downturn" in ties between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump since May 10, 2025. This development came a day after Modi spoke about a "warm and engaging" phone call with his "once-upon-a-time good friend."

According to the US State Department, Pax Silica focuses on cooperation among trusted allies to create a secure, resilient, and innovation-driven silicon supply chain. The initiative is intended to safeguard materials critical to artificial intelligence and reduce coercive dependencies.

The remarks come amid ongoing engagements between New Delhi and Washington, including discussions on a trade agreement aimed at easing US tariffs on Indian goods. India is also set to host the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 in February, the first global AI summit in the Global South, focusing on 'People, Planet and Progress'.

Despite these developments, Congress emphasized that India's exclusion from Pax Silica highlights missed opportunities to secure its position in emerging global technology alliances.

Priyanka Gandhi Questions MGNREGA Renaming Move

Continued from page 1

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday questioned the Centre's reported plan to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), arguing that such a move would waste public funds without benefiting citizens.

Her remarks came after media reports suggested that the Union Cabinet had cleared a Bill to rename the rural employment scheme and increase guaranteed workdays. The programme could be renamed the Poojya Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojna, with annual employment days rising from 100 to 125.

Priyanka Gandhi asked why the name of a scheme running successfully since 2005 needed to be changed. She explained that renaming would require extensive administrative work, including updating documents and systems, which would add extra costs to the exchequer. "Renaming everything involves a big process and costs money. What is the need for doing this at all?" she questioned.

Backing her view, Congress MP Rajeev Shukla called the move unnecessary and said removing Mahatma Gandhi's name was hard to justify. He added that the term "Bapu" is widely used in the country,

Priyanka Gandhi criticizes Centre's plan to rename MGNREGA, citing unnecessary costs and administrative burdens, sparking political debate between Congress and BJP leaders

including in Gujarat.

The BJP defended the proposed renaming, with MP Brij Lal saying it was meant to honour Mahatma Gandhi, not harm his legacy. He added that Gandhi, as the Father of the Nation, deserves such recognition and suggested Priyanka Gandhi's objections were more about removing "Gandhi" from the title than the scheme itself. MGNREGA provides at least 100 days of wage work annually to rural adults over 18, with employment offered within 15 days. Wages are directly paid, ensuring equal pay, and the programme runs nationwide except in fully urban areas.

Government and tribal groups discussed governance, land rights, and security concerns.

Second Round Talks Held On Kuki-Zo Issues

IMPHAL

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Kuki-Zo tribal groups under the Suspension of Operations (SoO), and Manipur government officials held the second round of tripartite talks in New Delhi on December 12.

Representatives of the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF) said the discussions focused on demands for a Union Territory with a Legislature for the Kuki-Zo tribal people in Manipur. The first round of talks in November had largely rejected this demand.

The tribal groups emphasized land rights in the hill districts, stating that authority over tribal lands historically rests with village chiefs. They argued that successive Manipur government policies have undermined this traditional governance system. According to the KNO and UPF, a Union Territory with a Legislature would provide a constitutional and institutional framework to protect their ancestral lands and ensure fair governance.

The statement noted that ethnic violence since May 3, 2023, along with the use of state machinery against tribal citizens, has deepened the divide. The organisations claimed that the state government failed to uphold its constitutional duties and that reintegration under the current administrative system is no longer possible.

The tribal groups said Article 371C and the Hill Areas Committee have not effectively protected tribal communities, leaving them vulnerable to land dispossession. They argued that a separate Union Territory remains the only viable solution to ensure security, justice, and long-term peace.

KNO and UPF, representing 23 underground militant outfits with over 2,200 cadres under the 2008 SoO, stated that only a Constitution-based political solution can safeguard the rights and survival of the Kuki-Zo people in Manipur's hill regions.

AIADMK Alleges Karnataka Mekedatu Project Threatens Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday claimed that the Congress government in Karnataka aims to turn Tamil Nadu into a desert through the Mekedatu dam project.

Speaking on social media platform 'X', Palaniswami said Karnataka is moving ahead with constructing a balancing reservoir at Mekedatu without considering its harmful effects on Tamil Nadu. He also criticised the ruling DMK government in the state, saying it failed to strongly represent Tamil Nadu's interests before the Cauvery Management Authority and the Supreme Court.

"The DMK government under Chief Minister M.K. Stalin did not present strong arguments for Tamil Nadu and acted half-heartedly," Palaniswami wrote. He added that whenever DMK comes to power, it cedes the state's rights on Cauvery river water to Karnataka, calling it a betrayal that "cannot be forgiven."

Palaniswami urged the chief minister to immediately take legal steps to safeguard Tamil Nadu's water rights. He also accused the Karnataka government of pursuing the project solely to harm Tamil Nadu.

The remarks came after Karnataka formed an expert team to accelerate the Mekedatu dam project following a Supreme Court order. The project aims to construct a balancing reservoir across the Cauvery river in Mekedatu to meet Bengaluru's drinking water needs and generate hydroelectric power.

State Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan said the Tamil Nadu government has filed a review petition before the Supreme Court and submitted a detailed plea to the Central Water Commission (CWC) on December 9. The submission highlighted how the Mekedatu project would adversely affect Tamil Nadu and contradict Supreme Court directives.

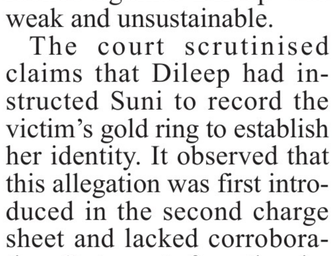
Palaniswami's comments reflect rising tensions between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over the long-standing Cauvery river water dispute.

Court Acquits Dileep In 2017 Assault Case

KOCHI

The Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Court on December 8 acquitted Malayalam actor Dileep in the sensational 2017 sexual assault case, citing lack of evidence and inconsistencies in the prosecution's arguments. Judge Honey M Varghese noted that the prosecution had "miserably" failed to prove any conspiracy between Dileep and prime accused Pulsar Suni.

The case involved the assault on a multilingual actress on February 17, 2017, when the accused allegedly forced their way into her car for two hours. Pulsar Suni sexually assaulted her and recorded the act with the help of others. While six accused, including



Suni, were later sentenced to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment, the court found that evidence against Dileep was weak and unsustainable.

The court scrutinised claims that Dileep had instructed Suni to record the victim's gold ring to establish her identity. It observed that this allegation was first introduced in the second charge sheet and lacked corroboration. Statements from the victim and approvers did not consistently support this claim, with the court noting contradictions and changes in testimonies during the trial.

Further, the prosecution's allegations regarding prior plans, including attempts to assault the victim in Goa and instructions dating back to 2013, were found unsupported by reliable evidence. The court highlighted that the visuals themselves clearly revealed the victim's identity, making claims about recording the ring unnecessary.

After reviewing all evidence, Judge Varghese concluded that the charges against Dileep were unproven. The verdict brought closure to a case that had captured national attention and triggered widespread discussions about the Malayalam film industry and criminal justice in Kerala.

Nitish Kumar Allots New Departments, Keeps Civil Aviation

PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has distributed portfolios of newly formed departments among ministers, keeping the Civil Aviation Department with himself, according to an official notification.

On December 9, the Bihar cabinet approved the creation of three new departments: Youth, Employment and Skill Development, Higher Education, and Civil Aviation. Alongside this, the government also renamed three existing departments. The Animal and Fisheries Resource Department is now the Dairy, Fisheries and Animal Resources Department. The Labour Resources Department has been renamed Labour Resources and Migrant Workers Welfare Department. The Art, Culture and Youth Department is now called the Art and Culture Department.

The notification issued on December 12 revealed the portfolio allocations. Sanjay Singh 'Tiger', who already holds the Labour Resources and Migrant Workers Welfare Department, will also handle the Youth, Employment and Skill Development Department. State Education Minister Sunil Kumar has been given charge of the new Higher Education Department. The Chief Minister himself will continue to oversee the Civil Aviation Department.

Nadda Lays Foundation Stone Of New BJP Office

SHIMLA

BJP national president J.P. Nadda on Saturday laid the foundation stone of the party's new state office in Shimla, calling it a 'Sanskar Kendra' that will energise the organisation.

Nadda said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had emphasised that BJP offices should be modern centres equipped for training, research, and social media activities. He added that of the party's target to build 787 offices nationwide, 617 have already been completed. In Himachal Pradesh, nine offices have been built and 11 are under construction.

Highlighting the party's five Ks – karyakarta (workers), karyakram (programmes), karyakarini (working committee), kosh (funds), and karyalaya (office) – Nadda said the BJP has strong workers, programmes, committees, and is now focusing on constructing offices with the help of funds.

The new office will be located in Majthai near Jubbarhatti Airport in the Shimla Rural assembly segment, about 29 km from the city. Nadda inspected the site, reviewed the building plans presented by state chief Rajiv Bindal, and provided guidance on the office's structure, functional requirements, and future use.

The foundation-laying ceremony, conducted with Vedic chants by five priests, included the 'Kalash Sthapana' (consecration of the urn) and lasted about 45 minutes. Nadda later interacted with party workers over tea, discussing organisational strengthening and upcoming programmes.

Several leaders attended the event, including Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur, State In-charge Shrikant Sharma, Co-In-charge Sanjay Tandon, former Union Minister Anurag Thakur, and former state BJP president Suresh Kashyap. Nadda personally placed the first brick of the new office.

Earlier, on Friday night, he visited Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri's house to congratulate him on his daughter's wedding.

Maharashtra CM Unveils New Scheme For Western Mumbai Redevelopment

NAGPUR

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday announced a new scheme aimed at speeding up redevelopment projects in Mumbai's western suburbs and supporting the state's "Housing for All" initiative. The scheme specifically targets areas where redevelopment has been stalled due to defence and military restrictions.

These constrained zones include Fanal Zone areas, Juhu Military Transmission Station areas, Kandivali-Malad Central Ordnance Depot (COD) complex, and land within other defence sectors. According to the Chief Minister, redevelopment in these areas has been impossible due to past restrictions.

Under the new scheme,

the government will provide free floor space index (FSI) for 300 sq ft tenements for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and up to 600 sq ft for Economically Backward Class (EBC) and Lower Income Group (LIG) residents. Incentive FSI will also be granted while basic FSI rights of original landowners remain unaffected.

Unconsumed FSI can be converted into Transferable Development Rights (TDR), which can be sold to fund redevelopment projects. All existing incentives, premiums, and non-refundable benefits under previous regulations will continue under the new scheme.

Fadnavis said the scheme will make previously unfeasible projects viable, offering relief to residents in Juhu, Kandivali, Malad, and other areas. Mumbai BJP chief Ameet Satam welcomed the announcement, noting it will help accelerate much-needed redevelopment in western suburbs.

Historically, redevelopment near flight paths of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, and around high-frequency towers, signal stations, and defence establishments, faced severe restrictions, which the new scheme aims to address.

PET REGISTRATION

Chennai Records Nearly One Lakh Pet Dogs

CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has registered nearly one lakh pet dogs since it began mandatory licensing, anti-rabies vaccinations, and microchipping at its veterinary facilities on October 8. Official data shows 98,523 dogs have been registered, with 54,576 already issued licences and fitted with microchips.

The initiative aims to improve tracking of pets, prevent rabies, and enhance animal welfare in the city. To manage the surge in applications, GCC launched special three-day pet licensing camps on Friday at eight locations: Manali, Madhavaram, Tondiarpet, Ambattur, Anna Nagar, Valasaravakkam, Adyar, and Perungudi. At these camps, pet owners can complete registration, vaccination, microchipping, and receive licences free of cost. The deadline for mandatory licensing has also been extended to December 14, with residents urged to comply to avoid penalties.

GCC Chief Veterinary Officer J. Kamal Hussain said about 3–4% of applications come from outside GCC limits, including neighbouring corporations and village panchayats. Such applications or forms with incomplete vaccination details are rejected. He clarified that non-GCC residents entering city limits without a licence will not be fined.

Microchipping services are offered at five ABC centres—Pulianthope, Royapettah, Meenambakkam, Sholinganallur, and T. Nagar. However, some residents reported long waits and limited staff, with centres handling only 150 dogs daily instead of the intended 400. GCC officials advised owners to visit the special camps to complete licensing and microchipping efficiently, especially when ABC centres are overcrowded.

QUICK READ

Over Seventy Cows Die After Fodder Poisoning

Rajkot

More than 70 cows died in a Rajkot village after eating fodder made from groundnut plants on Thursday. District Collector Om Prakash and a veterinary team visited the site to investigate. They collected food and tissue samples for forensic testing to identify any harmful agents. Doctors, paramedics, volunteers, and the village sarpanch have been treating the remaining cows. Authorities are working closely with villagers to save as many animals as possible and prevent further losses.

Nine Arrested In Cyber Fraud Worth Crores

New Delhi

Delhi Police's IFSO unit has arrested nine people linked to a large cyber-fraud and money laundering syndicate. The gang operated from a Dwarka hotel using multiple bank accounts to move illicit funds. Sultan Salim Shaikh's Axis Bank account alone handled 10,423 transactions worth Rs 5.24 crore in just five days. Police said the accused coordinated through a network of account holders and middlemen. Authorities continue investigations while trying to trace the remaining funds.

BJP Goa Asks Leaders About Nightclub Fire Comments

Panaji

BJP Goa has asked former ministers Michael Lobo and Dilip Parulekar to explain their remarks on corruption following the December 6 Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub fire that killed 25 people. Party president Damodar Naik said written clarifications have been requested and action will follow after review. Lobo and Parulekar had linked coastal corruption to illegal tourism activities on a national channel. Naik stressed party discipline and countered AAP's corruption allegations against BJP.

Delhi CM, LG Attend NSUT Convocation Ceremony

Delhi government promotes skills, innovation, and entrepreneurship for youth's global success

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena attended the third convocation ceremony of Netaji Subhash University of Technology (NSUT) at Yashobhoomi on Saturday. The Chief Minister congratulated all graduates and postgraduates for completing their studies. Speaking at the event, she highlighted the importance of youth leadership, innovation, and nation-building, drawing inspiration from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and India's freedom struggle.

CM Rekha Gupta noted that students face challenges such as pollution, infrastructure, and green energy. She encouraged them to use the education and skills gained at NSUT to address these issues. She also praised Prime Minister Modi's Digital India initiative, self-reliance, and startup culture, saying that innovation has become both a policy and a priority in the country.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the Delhi government is actively promoting skills, technology, research, and entrepreneurship to help the city's youth compete globally. "Netaji Subhash University of Technology is a laboratory for innovation, leadership, and nation-building. The youth emerging from here will play a decisive role in India's progress," she said in a post on X.

Cabinet Minister Ashish Sood and other distinguished members of the university were also present. The ceremony celebrated the achievements of students while underlining the government's vision to equip young leaders with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to shape the nation's future. The event marked a significant step in connecting education with practical solutions for the country's evolving challenges.

CM Bhupendra Patel Inaugurates Elevated Surat Market

GANDHINAGAR

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the state's first elevated market yard constructed by the Surat Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) on Saturday. Designed to allow smooth movement of heavy vehicles on the first floor, the market aims to prevent congestion and ease trade. Alongside the market, Patel inaugurated a free primary healthcare centre and a seed distribution centre for farmers, traders, and workers visiting the yard.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated Gujarat's first elevated APMC market in Surat, featuring modern facilities, healthcare, and seed distribution centres for farmers and traders

Appreciating the APMC, the Chief Minister said that Surat APMC, which began in 1951 with an income of Rs 15,000, has become a symbol of cooperative strength. He highlighted the government's efforts under Prime Minister Narendra Modi to boost farmer welfare using infrastructure and technology. Patel praised the fully computerized system, including online RTGS payments, which attracts farmers from Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

He noted that the market yard sees a daily footfall of 12,000–15,000 people and has led Gujarat in income for the past two years. The CM stressed the state's push for agro and fruit processing chains, special agri-export zones, AI-based services like Kisan e-Mitra, and natural farming to increase income, sustainability, and employment.

Agriculture Minister Jitubhai Vaghani lauded the APMC for modern facilities, transparent systems, and cooperative strength, while MLA and Surat APMC Chairman Sandip Desai highlighted the 100-foot ramps, 108 high-tech shops, lifts, parking, and other facilities funded partly through a Rs 19 crore central subsidy.

The event saw the presence of Finance Minister Kanu Desai, Tribal Development Minister Naresh Patel, MPs, MLAs, cooperative leaders, and farmers, celebrating Gujarat's progressive approach to farmer-centric market development.

NGT directs Uttarakhand Chief Secretary to address Ganga floodplain delay

NGT Orders Uttarakhand Chief Secretary To Act

NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand to personally oversee and resolve delays in demarcating the Ganga river floodplain, citing nearly two years of inaction despite repeated assurances. The order came during a hearing on a plea alleging construction of residential apartments in Kankhal, Haridwar, within the river's floodplain, raising environmental concerns and potential pollution.

The Tribunal, led by Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Expert Member A Senthil Vel, noted that under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016, floodplains must be marked based on the 1:100-year highest flood level. While other Ganga-basin states have adopted a uniform method using a one-metre contour, Uttarakhand has lagged behind.

Earlier, the state had promised completion within six months, but no progress was made. During the hearing, the Executive Engineer of the Irrigation Division, Haridwar, appeared virtually, stating that work could not proceed due to lack of funds. The Tribunal flagged that this issue had not been disclosed earlier and noted inconsistencies in the state's method—whether to use a one-metre contour or a one-metre digital elevation model (DEM).

The NGT expressed concern that prolonged inaction affects public interest and environmental governance. It impleaded the Chief Secretary as a party, directing him to ensure funds do not stall the statutory obligation and to take action against officers responsible for the delay. The Chief Secretary must complete the demarcation within eight weeks and submit a report to the Tribunal. The matter is scheduled for review on February 23, 2026.

Union Minister Promotes Animal Husbandry To Boost Income

RAISEN

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday stressed the importance of animal husbandry in raising farmers' incomes while addressing a Farmers' Seminar and Exhibition Program in Raisen, Madhya Pradesh. He highlighted that transforming farmers' lives requires diversified income sources beyond traditional farming.

Chouhan cited the National Dairy Research Institute, Asia's premier institution in dairy research, as a key supporter for enhancing farmer incomes through livestock-based ventures. "Our goal is to start animal husbandry to increase income and improve implementation of other schemes to raise living standards," he said.

During the event, the Minister handed over kits to 500 farmers and provided training in livestock care, covering aspects such as vaccination, feed management, disease prevention, and milk distribution. He emphasised that merely owning livestock is insufficient; farmers must gain skills to make animal husbandry profitable.

Chouhan also highlighted government initiatives like Laadli Behna Yojna, which transfers funds directly to women, and the Kishan Samaan Vidhi Yojna, which provides Rs 6,000 annually to farmers. He encouraged farmers to adopt ventures such as poultry and dairy to supplement farm income.

The Minister praised the efforts of the National Dairy Research Institute, led by Dheer Singh, for organising the seminar and guiding farmers on utilising government schemes effectively. He underlined that combining expertise, government support, and diversified farming methods is crucial to achieve sustainable income growth, echoing the government's broader goal of Doubling Farmers' Income.

Bihar Police Welcomes 1,218 New Sub-Inspectors

PATNA

A grand passing-out parade of 1,218 trainee sub-inspectors of the 2023 batch was held on Saturday at the Bihar Police Academy in Rajgir. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the chief guest, took salute of the parade and congratulated the new officers, wishing them success in their careers. Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Samrat Choudhary, Minister Vijay Choudhary, and Rural Development Minister Shravan Kumar were also present.

The batch includes 779 men, 436 women, and three transgender officers—Bunty Kumar, Madhu Kashyap, and Ronit Jha—making history. It also has 23 trainees selected under the sports quota and four from the Jharkhand cadre. Outstanding performers were honoured, including Ankit Kumar, who received the Chief Minister's Pistol and Baton; Rupesh Kumar, awarded the Sword; and Meena Kumari, who received the Best Parade Commander Award.

Director of the Police Training Centre, R. Malar Villi, said trainees underwent rigorous indoor and outdoor training to prepare for field challenges. All 1,218 officers will now join the Bihar Police and handle law and order duties across the state.

The ceremony followed tradition but included a deviation during the inspection phase. Normally, only the Chief Minister and DGP accompany the inspection jeep. At Rajgir, CM Nitish Kumar insisted that three ministers—Samrat Choudhary, Vijay Choudhary, and Shravan Kumar—join the inspection alongside him and the DGP. Though initially hesitant, all three ministers boarded the jeep after repeated insistence, sparking discussion in political and bureaucratic circles.

The event marked both a celebration of the new batch and a historic moment for inclusivity in Bihar Police.

75 Percent Graduating Students Women At PU

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria presided over the 73rd convocation of Panjab University (PU) on Saturday, awarding degrees, medals, and prizes to students passing the 2025 examinations. He noted that nearly 75 per cent of graduating students are women, calling it a strong reflection of women's empowerment through education and linking it to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of increased female participation in higher studies.

During the ceremony, honorary degrees were conferred on Prof K.N. Pathak and Dr Vijay P. Bhatkar (Doctor of Science Honoris Causa) and Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel (Doctor of Laws). PU awards were presented to Prof Pradeep Thalappil (Vigyan Ratna), Sarabjot Singh (Khel Ratna), and Amarjit Grewal (Sahitya Ratna).

The Governor praised PU's achievements in national and international rankings and highlighted the university's potential to become a globally leading institution. He also cited its illustrious alumni, including former Prime Ministers Dr Manmohan Singh and I.K. Gujral, former President Shankar Dayal Sharma, Olympian Neeraj Chopra, cricketer Kapil Dev, Nobel laureate Dr Har Gobind Khorana, actors Anupam Kher and Kirron Kher, and former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, saying their accomplishments continue to inspire students.

Referring to the conferment of 350 PhDs in less than a year, the Governor called it a testament to the dedication of students, parents, and faculty. Vice-Chancellor Renu Vig emphasized PU's academic and research growth, highlighting 33 patents, research grants, international collaborations, strong alumni support, and achievements at Khelo India 2025.

The event included an academic procession, donning of robes, and a group photograph of gold medallists. Punjab Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains, senior officers, faculty, students, and families were also present.

Maharashtra Govt Orders Probe Into CIDCO Housing Quality

NAGPUR

Maharashtra Minister of State for Urban Development Madhuri Misal announced on Saturday that the government will conduct a probe to check the quality of houses constructed by CIDCO in Panvel and Navi Mumbai. She made the statement while replying to a discussion initiated by member Vikrant Patil under Rule 97.

Minister Misal said that for CIDCO houses, maintenance and repair charges are collected for the first two years. These funds cover building upkeep, water, electricity, elevator maintenance, and security expenses. Once 51 per cent of residents agree, CIDCO registers the housing society and transfers maintenance responsibility to it. She added that the issue of property tax for these houses is pending in court, and action will be taken according to the court's decision.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for School Education Pankaj Bhoyar assured the state council that teachers will be provided in all schools, ensuring no school remains without staff. He emphasized that, following a High Court ruling, government decisions regarding school recognition are valid. Bhoyar also said the government is supporting military schools to instil discipline and facilitate NDA admissions, with plans to provide grants and facilities for new schools under a PPP model.

INDIA AI MEDICINE

India Emerging Leader In AI Traditional Medicine

NEW DELHI

India is emerging as a global leader in integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into traditional medicine, said Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary of the Ministry of Ayush. Speaking ahead of the second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicines, he highlighted India's growing role in the sector.

Kotecha said India proposed a dedicated WHO working group on traditional medicine, accepted by international agencies including WHO, ITU, and WIPO. "We are developing India-specific generative AI chatbots, digital solutions, and platforms for traditional medicine," he added.

During the summit at Bharat Mandapam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to launch the "Ayush Integrated Portal" or Ayush Grid. The portal will serve as a one-stop digital solution on Ayush with an AI-integrated interface for users, researchers, industries, and regulators.

Kotecha emphasized that the summit, which will bring over 110 countries together, will encourage member nations to commit to advancing traditional medicine. He said the event will help India lead in mainstreaming traditional medicine, supporting public health, research, and innovation.

The summit will also see the launch of a global digital library on traditional medicine. The library indexes over 1.6 million publications, including 70,000 from India, serving as a comprehensive resource for researchers and practitioners worldwide.

Kotecha said these initiatives reinforce India's leadership in integrating modern technology with traditional practices, enhancing knowledge sharing, research, and global influence in the traditional medicine sector.

QUICK READ

Over 10,000 Afghans Deported From Pakistan, Iran

Kabul

More than 10,000 Afghan refugees were forcibly deported from Pakistan and Iran over two days, Afghan officials said. Deputy spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat reported that 1,939 families, totaling 10,043 people, returned through major border crossings, including Torkham and Spin Boldak. Of these, 1,464 families were relocated to their regions, and 1,279 received humanitarian aid. Authorities also distributed 1,626 SIM cards. Last Wednesday, around 2,300 refugees were similarly repatriated.

South Korea Plans Lunar Orbiter, Lander Missions

Seoul

South Korea plans to launch a lunar communication orbiter in 2029 and an unmanned lunar lander in 2032, the Korea Aerospace Administration (KASA) said. KASA chief Yoon Young-bin shared the goals during a briefing to President Lee Jae Myung in Sejong. The orbiter, launched using the homegrown Nuri rocket, will help secure deep-space communication needed for future moon missions. KASA also aims for yearly Nuri launches and a reusable rocket by 2035.

US States Challenge Trump's $100,000 H-1B Fee Policy

Bonta said the high fee may strain services, worsen shortages, and cut access

WASHINGTON

Twenty US states filed a lawsuit challenging President Donald Trump's new H-1B visa fee. The states argue the policy is unlawful and harms essential public services.

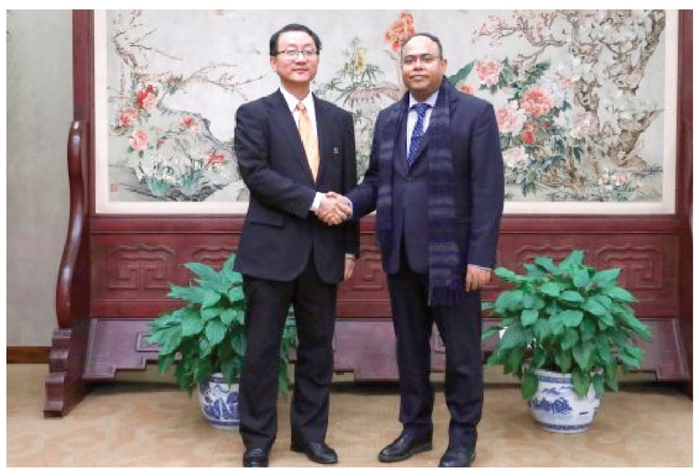
The lawsuit targets Trump's September decision to raise the H-1B visa fee for highly skilled foreign workers to $100,000. Currently, employers pay between $2,000 and $5,000 in fees. H-1B visas are widely used by hospitals, universities, and public schools.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta said the president lacks authority to impose the fee. "The law allows fees only to cover visa program costs," Bonta explained. He added that high-skilled foreign workers strengthen California's workforce, especially in healthcare and education. In New York, more than a third of healthcare workers are immigrants, while universities and hospitals rely heavily on H-1B professionals.

Bonta warned that the steep fee could burden service providers, worsen staff shortages, and force cuts in vital services. "We are defending Californians' access to world-class universities, schools, and hospitals," he said.

States joining California include New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, New Jersey, and Washington. Supporters of Trump's policy argue that foreign workers take jobs from Americans, while opponents emphasize that H-1B visas address skilled worker shortages.

Separately, the US Chamber of Commerce has also filed lawsuits against the fee. A hearing in Washington, DC, is scheduled next week. Trump's order affects only new H-1B recipients whose sponsoring employers have not paid the $100,000 fee. Existing visa holders or those applying before September 21 are exempt.



MEA Secretary Ghosh Holds Talks With China

MEA's Sujit Ghosh and Chinese officials held productive talks, strengthening ties and agreeing to advance bilateral cooperation and regional coordination

BEIJING

Joint Secretary (East Asia) in India's Ministry of External Affairs, Sujit Ghosh, held high-level talks with Chinese officials in Beijing from December 11 to 12, 2025, aiming to strengthen bilateral relations between India and China.

Ghosh met Liu Jinsong, Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs at China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong. The discussions focused on advancing exchanges, restoring institutional dialogue, and managing differences while prioritising people-centric engagements. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the key consensus reached at the Tianjin meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping.

Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India, Yu Jing, described the talks as "timely and productive," noting that they were conducted in a positive atmosphere and yielded meaningful consensus. The two countries agreed to strengthen coordination in multilateral and regional affairs, uphold multilateralism, and safeguard the shared interests of the Global South.

According to the MEA, the meetings also reviewed planned exchanges and activities for the coming year. India highlighted the importance of early resolution of pending export control issues. Both sides briefly discussed regional and global developments of mutual interest.

In addition to diplomatic talks, Ghosh met with the Director-General (Asian Affairs) of the Chinese Ministry of Commerce to discuss bilateral trade and commercial cooperation. The meetings were described as constructive and forward-looking, reflecting the strategic guidance of the two countries' leaders and signalling positive momentum in stabilising and rebuilding bilateral ties.

The visit comes amid efforts by both nations to maintain steady dialogue and deepen cooperation in areas of shared interest, reinforcing a pragmatic approach to managing differences while advancing mutual priorities in regional and global affairs.

Global Water Scarcity Worsens Per FAO Report

ROME

Renewable water availability per person has fallen 7% over the past decade, intensifying pressure on scarce freshwater resources, the FAO said. The 2025 AQUASTAT Snapshot shows rising water withdrawals, especially in agriculture, which uses 72% of global freshwater.

Regions like Northern Africa and Western Asia face severe shortages. FAO highlights that sustainable management of rivers and aquifers is critical as demand grows and water stress worsens worldwide.

Indian High Commissioner visits cyclone-hit areas to review relief operations

Indian HC Santosh Jha Reviews Cyclone Ditwah Relief Efforts

COLOMBO

Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Santosh Jha, visited areas affected by Cyclone Ditwah on Friday to assess rescue, relief, and rehabilitation efforts. He paid respects to Mahanayake Theros of the Malwatte and Asgiriya Chapters and informed them about India's ongoing support under Operation Sagar Bandhu.

During his visit to Nelummala village in Udattawa, one of the worst-affected areas where 31 lives were lost, HC Jha offered condolences and was briefed by local authorities on ongoing rescue and relief operations. The High Commission highlighted India's transition from immediate relief efforts to rehabilitation and reconstruction, emphasising continued support for Sri Lanka's recovery.

Earlier, Colombo West International Terminal contributed LKR 100 million towards rebuilding efforts, reflecting collaborative initiatives to restore normalcy in the cyclone-hit regions. India continues wide-ranging humanitarian engagement in Sri Lanka, including engineering, medical, and logistical support.

The Indian Army's Engineer Task Force, consisting of 48 personnel, was rapidly airlifted to help restore crucial communication and transport links in cyclone-hit areas. Working closely with the Sri Lankan Army, the team is repairing roads, bridges, and other essential infrastructure using Bailey bridges, pneumatic boats, HESCO bags, heavy machinery, drones, and advanced equipment.

They have already contributed to rebuilding key sites like the Chilaw and Kilinochchi bridges and provided medical assistance to over 5,000 affected people. Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri also delivered life-saving medicines to Sri Lanka. Under Operation Sagar Bandhu, India continues offering relief, infrastructure support, and long-term rehabilitation, reflecting its Neighbourhood First policy.

Two Years On UAE Consensus Guides Climate Action Globally

ABU DHABI

Today marks two years since the UAE concluded COP28, establishing the historic UAE Consensus, a milestone in global climate cooperation. Guided by the UAE's pragmatic and visionary leadership, the Consensus united 198 countries around a comprehensive set of measures addressing mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance. These measures aim to reduce emissions, decarbonize industries, and protect the most vulnerable populations. Key targets included tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030, doubling energy efficiency, and halting deforestation. COP28 also created the first-ever fund for loss and damage.

Beyond negotiations, COP28 launched the Presidential Action Agenda, engaging the private sector in practical decarbonization efforts. Landmark initiatives such as the Oil & Gas Decarbonization Charter (OGDC) brought together international and national oil companies representing 40% of global oil production to eliminate methane emissions and cut carbon from operations. Additionally, ALTÉRRA, the world's largest climate-focused investment fund, was unveiled with a goal to mobilize $250 billion by 2030 for global climate solutions.

The outcomes of COP28 reflected the UAE's role as a connector, convening governments, industry, finance, and civil society to build consensus. By fostering inclusive dialogue and partnership, the UAE demonstrated that collective action can drive global progress while leaving no one behind.

As energy demand continues to rise, the UAE Consensus remains a blueprint for pragmatic and multilateral action.

Families Urge Authorities To Locate Missing Students Quetta

QUETTA

Families of underage students missing in Quetta, Balochistan, have urged authorities to trace their children amid continuing military operations and arrests in the region. Local sources reported that new operations took place in Jiwani, a coastal town in Gwadar district, leading to multiple detentions.

At a press conference at the Quetta Press Club, Samrosh Baloch said that Pakistani forces had taken several young students from their homes during raids months ago, leaving their whereabouts unknown. "For years, we have endured raids without warning. Young boys are taken, remain missing for months, and are sometimes released without any explanation," she said.

The missing minors include Hairbiyar Baloch, Afzal Baloch, Beebarg Qambrani, Noor Muhammad, and Hammal Qambrani. Families reported that none of the boys have been presented in court or formally charged. Samrosh Baloch also shared that members of her family have been detained and later released on several occasions.

On December 6, Pakistani forces conducted search operations in her area, raiding homes for several hours but finding no illegal items. In Jiwani tehsil, operations targeted Sadiq Bazaar, Kaldaan, and Gapt, with seven men—including Tufail, Jamshaid, and Zohaib—taken to undisclosed locations. Two labourers from Kuntani were also detained.

Additional operations were reported in Gresha and Ornach areas of Khuzdar, where several young men were apprehended. These incidents highlight a continued pattern of enforced disappearances in Balochistan, raising concerns among families and human rights observers who call for the immediate tracing and release of the missing students.

Indonesia Floods Claim Over Thousand Lives, Rescue Ongoing

JAKARTA

The death toll from floods and landslides across three provinces on Indonesia's Sumatra Island has surpassed 1,000, with 218 people still missing, according to the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB). The disasters have caused widespread destruction of infrastructure, including 1,200 public facilities, 219 health centres, 581 schools, 434 houses of worship, 290 offices, and 145 bridges.

Abdul Muhari, head of BNPB's Data and Information Center, said verification of victims' names and addresses is ongoing at the sub-district level, with cross-checking against civil records to ensure accurate data.

President Prabowo Subianto visited affected areas in Aceh on Friday and pledged government support for relief and recovery efforts. "Together we will improve this situation. The government will step in and help with everything," he said, urging citizens to stay strong while restoration continues. He also expressed hope that community activities, including children's education, can resume soon.

Earlier this week, Subianto chaired a meeting on disaster response, instructing joint operations by the military, police, search and rescue agencies, BNPB, and local governments to accelerate aid delivery, maintain security, and restore connectivity to cut-off areas.

Experts warn that climate change is intensifying extreme weather in Asia. Hijrah Saputra, a disaster management lecturer at Airlangga University, said early warning systems have not reached remote villages, and environmental rehabilitation remains inadequate. He emphasized the need for better spatial planning, watershed management, and integrated early warning systems to reduce future casualties.

The ongoing floods highlight Indonesia's urgent need to strengthen disaster preparedness and resilience to protect communities from increasingly severe climate-driven events.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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1	3	4	2	8	9	7	5	6
6	8	5	3	1	7	9	2	4
3	1	9	5	6	8	4	7	2
7	5	2	4	9	1	6	3	8
8	4	6	7	2	3	1	9	5

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

POLIO ALERT

Rawalpindi Detects Poliovirus Before Vaccination Drive

RAWALPINDI

Ahead of Punjab's final anti-polio vaccination drive of 2025, two environmental samples from Rawalpindi district tested positive for poliovirus, raising renewed focus on containment efforts. The four-day campaign is scheduled from December 15 to 18.

The World Health Organization collected the samples, one from a nullah in Safdarabad near Pirwadhai and another from Dhoke Dalal along the Rawalpindi-Islamabad border. District Health Authority CEO Ehsan Ghani said the virus was genetically linked to an active cluster circulating in Rahimyar Khan and Karachi. He added that the test results were "not worrisome" but noted that results from last month's campaign would reflect in the December environmental samples.

Preparations for the campaign have been finalised, with an important coordination meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner's Office to review arrangements for team formation, security, and monitoring. The meeting was attended by health officials, WHO representatives, and district authorities. Deputy Commissioner Hassan Waqar Cheema stressed the need for coordinated efforts from all institutions to eradicate polio. He directed that door-to-door access for vaccination teams must be ensured and warned of strict action against negligent staff.

Public cooperation is being emphasised, with authorities urging parents to support vaccination teams to protect children from lifelong disabilities. The district administration instructed all departments to provide full support and supervision to ensure smooth campaign execution across urban and rural areas.

The four-day campaign aims to vaccinate nearly 23.3 million children under five in Punjab. Around 200,000 frontline workers will be deployed, with more than 10,000 in Rawalpindi alone, targeting over one million children. Punjab authorities reiterated their commitment to ending polio and stressed that every child must receive the two life-saving drops to prevent the crippling disease.

QUICK READ

Four sentenced in major bank fraud case

Ahmedabad

A CBI court in Ahmedabad sentenced four private individuals to three years of rigorous imprisonment each for defrauding Bank of Baroda. The convicts—Manojbhai, Pareshbhai, Poorva, and Lilavanti Tanti, partners of M/s P.M. Marketing—were also fined Rs 50,000 each. The 2008 case involved submission of fake financial statements to secure a Rs 3 crore cash credit, while hiding an existing loan from State Bank of India, causing a loss of Rs 3.48 crore. After a decade-long investigation and trial, the court found them guilty. The CBI said the verdict deters financial crimes and strengthens accountability in public sector banking.

Shivganga Drillers launches Rs 400 crore IPO

New Delhi

Shivganga Drillers, an oilfield services company, has filed papers with SEBI to raise Rs 400 crore through its first initial public offering (IPO). The IPO will be a fresh issue of shares, with no offer-for-sale component, the company said in its draft red herring prospectus. The funds raised are planned to buy new plant and machinery, repay existing debts, and support general corporate activities. This move marks the company's debut in the stock market, aiming to expand operations and strengthen its financial position while offering investors a chance to participate in its growth story.

Shiprocket targets Rs 2,342 crore IPO launch

New Delhi

Shiprocket, the Temasek-backed e-commerce platform, has filed updated papers with SEBI to raise over Rs 2,342 crore through its initial public offering (IPO). The offer combines a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 1,100 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of Rs 1,242.3 crore by existing shareholders. Investors including Lightrock, Tribe Capital, Bertelsmann, Arvind Ltd, Gautam Kapoor, Saahil Goel, and Vishesh Khurana will dilute part of their stakes through the OFS. The move aims to strengthen Shiprocket's financial base while allowing early investors to partially exit, marking a significant step in the company's growth journey.

Commerce Ministry highlights trade talks startup boom

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal stated India has 2,01,335 startups, generating 21 lakh jobs, with nearly half having a woman director

NEW DELHI

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal shared updates on trade talks, startup growth, and export plans over the past ten days. He said India has crossed a major milestone with more than two lakh government-recognised startups across the country.

The ministry outlined progress on free trade agreements and bilateral engagements through meetings with key global partners. Goyal said discussions were held with European Union Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic to guide negotiating teams toward an early conclusion of the India-EU free trade agreement.

He also met Claudia Sanhueza, Chile's treasury undersecretary, after the fourth round of India-Chile CEPA talks. Both sides reviewed progress and agreed to work toward finalising the pact soon. Another meeting with Russia's Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov focused on cooperation in food, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and automobiles.

Goyal said the recognised startups now total 2,01,335, creating over 21 lakh jobs nationwide. Nearly half of these startups have at least one woman director, showing strong female participation in entrepreneurship.

The minister also announced that Dakshina Kannada has been named a District Export Hub. Seafood and cashew were added as focus export products to boost local industry, improve value-added work, and open new market opportunities.

Earlier, Goyal said Kolhapuri chappal exports could reach one billion dollars annually after Italian fashion brand Prada planned limited production of Kolhapuri-inspired sandals in India. He also reaffirmed India's commitment to stronger trade ties with Europe, including deeper cooperation with Italy in technology, defence, textiles, agriculture, research, and food processing. These efforts aim to strengthen growth, exports, jobs, and India's global economic position in coming years, officials said today.

India shines as economy defies global uncertainty

BSE CEO Sundararaman Ramamurthy praised India's economic strength, highlighting resilience amid global challenges, supported by policies that strengthened fundamentals and enhanced investor confidence

NEW DELHI

India remains a bright spot in the global economy despite uncertainty, Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran said on Saturday. He stated that the country is growing at a strong rate of 6.5 per cent, supported by stable finances, solid domestic demand, and ongoing reforms.

Speaking at an event hosted by the Bombay Stock Exchange in the capital, Nageswaran said India is well placed to handle global headwinds and continue on a steady growth path. He noted that investments in technology, infrastructure, and skills, along with a young population, are helping the economy stay resilient and competitive.

BSE Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Sundararaman Ramamurthy also praised India's economic strength. He said the country has shown resilience amid worldwide challenges, helped by policy steps that strengthened fundamentals and boosted investor confidence.

Ramamurthy added that capital markets play a key role in long-term wealth creation. He said transparent regulation and stable systems have supported growth as India moves toward its Viksit Bharat goal. He stressed that reforms, technology, and domestic participation will drive inclusive and sustainable development.

Motilal Oswal Financial Services Chairman Raamdeo Agrawal shared a similar view. He said India is entering a multi-trillion-dollar growth phase, where the economy and equity markets could expand strongly. He added that disciplined investors who stay invested will benefit over the next decade.

The BSE session highlighted India's strong position and underlined the importance of capital markets in supporting long-term national growth and creating inclusive opportunities for businesses, investors, and households across regions, sectors, and income groups, strengthening confidence, stability, and economic optimism for the years ahead nationwide today.

Indian markets end week on positive note

MUMBAI

Indian equity markets ended the week on a cautiously bullish note, supported by hopes of renewed foreign institutional investor (FII) inflows after the US Federal Reserve announced a 25-basis-point rate cut. Analysts said supportive global central bank policies and steady domestic investments helped sentiment despite global uncertainties.

Benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex posted marginal weekly declines of 0.36 per cent and 0.17 per cent, closing at 26,046 and 85,267, respectively, while midcap and smallcap indices underperformed. The week began weakly due to rupee depreciation and negative global cues, but optimism returned after the Fed's move, aiding a strong rebound in the final session.

Sectoral performance was mixed, with IT stocks lagging and PSU banks, realty, and consumer durables seeing buying interest. Analysts remain cautiously optimistic, tracking FII flows, inflation, and global cues.

November CPI inflation rose to 0.71% from 0.25%, driven by higher fuel, smaller food declines, and mixed miscellaneous trends

GST cuts expected to lower inflation significantly

NEW DELHI

The recent reduction in goods and services tax (GST) is likely to bring down consumer price index (CPI) inflation by around 25 basis points in the September–November 2025 period and could reduce it by 35 basis points in the current fiscal year, according to a new State Bank of India (SBI) report.

The report noted that Q1 FY27 inflation forecasts have been revised down by 100 basis points to 3.9 per cent from 4.9 per cent. Similarly, Q3 FY26 estimates were adjusted to 3.8 per cent from 0.6 per cent earlier. SBI highlighted that continued lower food inflation, aided by higher kharif production, healthy rabi sowing, adequate reservoir levels, and favorable soil moisture, will support subdued price pressures. Based on these factors, FY26 inflation is projected at 1.8 per cent and FY27 at 3.4 per cent.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also cut its FY26 inflation projection to 2 per cent from the previous estimate of 2.6 per cent. The central bank kept its options open for future rate adjustments but expects the repo rate of 5.25 per cent to remain lower for an extended period.

November CPI inflation rose slightly to 0.71 per cent from 0.25 per cent in October, driven by smaller food price declines and higher fuel and light costs at 2.32 per cent. Miscellaneous items saw mixed trends, with personal care and effects rising due to higher gold prices, while other items declined.

Excluding gold, headline CPI recorded a negative growth of 0.12 per cent year-on-year, highlighting the fluctuating trends in rural and urban food prices, including cereals, milk products, beverages, and prepared meals. Analysts said GST cuts, along with favorable agricultural conditions, will continue to ease inflation pressures and support economic stability through FY26.

SAIL records strong Nov sales growth surge

NEW DELHI

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) reported a strong sales performance in November 2025 with a year-on-year growth of 27 per cent, showing rising demand across markets.

The public sector steel major said its total sales rose sharply during the month, supported by higher domestic dispatches and improved distribution efficiency.

Retail sales volumes jumped 69 per cent to 0.14 million tonnes in November, compared with 0.084 million tonnes in the same month last year.

The company said growth was broad-based across product categories and channels, led by domestic saleable steel, road movement, and faster door deliveries from warehouses.

SAIL also emerged as the country's largest seller of TMT bars during the month, reflecting strong market presence.

Strong momentum was also seen during the April–November 2025 period, when cumulative sales reached 12.7 million tonnes, marking a 14 per cent rise over last year's levels.

The company said this performance came despite global price pressure, shifting demand, trade uncertainties, and ongoing geopolitical tensions affecting the steel sector.

Retail channel sales during the eight-month period rose to 0.97 million tonnes, up 14 per cent compared with the same period last year.

SAIL added that nationwide brand promotion campaigns and customer-focused strategies helped strengthen visibility and market connect.

The company said its teams continued to focus on service, logistics, and timely supply to meet customer needs.

In October, SAIL supplied the entire requirement of special grade steel for INS Androth, commissioned into the Indian Navy.

The company said the supply marked an important step toward India's self-reliance goals in the defence manufacturing sector.

FDI insurance reform expected to drive innovation

NEW DELHI

Industry leaders on Saturday welcomed the Union Cabinet's approval of the Insurance Laws Amendment Bill 2025, which raises the foreign direct investment limit in insurance companies to 100 per cent. They said the move will attract fresh capital, encourage innovation, and help expand insurance coverage across India.

The amendment allows composite licences, lowers capital requirements for new insurers, and introduces perpetual registration for intermediaries. Industry experts said these steps will simplify rules, improve competition, and make it easier for new players to enter the market.

PB Fintech Joint Group Chief Executive Officer Sarbvir Singh said the reform brings clarity and long term confidence to a sector that supports financial security. He said global investment and expertise can speed up innovation, improve customer experience, and raise service quality across regions.

RenewBuy Co founder and Chief Executive Officer Balachander Sekhar called the bill a forward looking reform that sets the foundation for long term growth. He said composite licensing will allow customer focused protection, while easier capital norms can help companies serve underserved markets.

Sekhar added that access to global technology and best practices will improve risk assessment, speed up claim settlement, and strengthen customer engagement. He said perpetual registration will reduce compliance burden and allow firms to focus on expanding reach.

Aon India Chief Executive Officer Rishi Mehra said the decision to allow full foreign ownership is a major step toward building a strong and competitive insurance ecosystem. He added that the reforms support India's journey toward a secure, inclusive, and future ready economy. Industry leaders believe these changes will deepen penetration and strengthen trust nationwide further.

CERT-In strengthens India's cyber defence framework

NEW DELHI

India's national cybersecurity agency, CERT-In, is strengthening a trusted cyber defence architecture through research collaborations, public–private partnerships, and international engagement, aligned with the Digital India vision, officials said. CERT-In Director General Dr. Sanjay Bahl said the agency issues timely alerts and advisories to prevent cyber threats proactively. Addressing visiting journalists, he outlined CERT-In's roles in crisis management, vulnerability assessment, incident response, information sharing, auditor empanelment, and specialised training.

He said India is emerging as a global cybersecurity hub with over 400 startups, a workforce of 6.5 lakh professionals, and a $20 billion industry. AI-driven tools aid threat detection but also pose risks. CERT-In uses AI analytics to counter advanced attacks. India reported 147 ransomware incidents in 2024, mitigated through real-time intelligence sharing. Officials said coordinated efforts position India as a secure digital ecosystem.

FINANCE FEEDBACK FOCUS

Government strengthens BFSI grievance redressal system

NEW DELHI

The government is taking major steps to improve grievance redressal in the banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) sector, officials said on Saturday. The Department of Financial Services (DFS) has been spearheading initiatives to ensure faster and more effective resolution of customer complaints.

Finance Ministry officials said that the Secretary (FS) personally reviews 20 randomly selected grievances every month. These sessions allow citizens to present their issues directly in the presence of Chairmen, Managing Directors, and CEOs of the concerned organisations. So far, 15 such meetings have been conducted, analysing 300 grievances to improve the quality of resolutions. Similar reviews are also conducted by Joint Secretaries and top officials within financial institutions.

The first round of Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAM) workshops for public sector banks was completed in 2025, focusing on effective complaint resolution. Banks have also been advised to use technology to collect feedback from branch customers to enhance service quality.

Since June 2025, the DFS has introduced a ranking system for public and private sector banks, as well as public sector insurance companies, based on the timeliness and quality of grievance handling. Officials said this initiative has significantly improved the responsiveness of institutions. Rankings for private insurers are expected to be introduced soon.

The government said these measures are enhancing the grievance redressal framework by improving turnaround times, ensuring transparent communication, and increasing customer service training. Officials added that continuous monitoring and top-level engagement are strengthening trust between customers and financial institutions, making the BFSI sector more accountable and customer-centric nationwide.

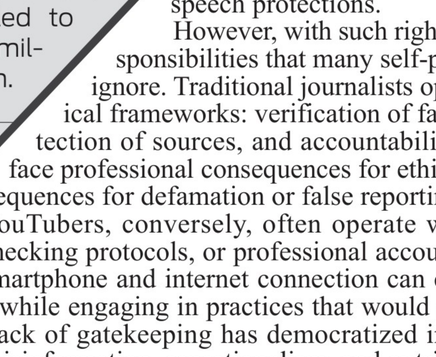
THE DARK Side of Digital Influence

The digital landscape has transformed how information flows in India. With over 460 million YouTube users, the platform has become a dominant force in news dissemination and public discourse. Yet beneath the veneer of democratized media lies a troubling reality: a growing number of content creators who weaponize their platforms for blackmail, extortion, and harassment. While not all YouTubers engage in such practices, the minority who do have become a genuine menace to society, blurring the lines between legitimate journalism and criminal activity.

A CASE STUDY IN CONTROVERSY: SAVUKKU SHANKAR

The recent arrest of Tamil YouTuber 'Savukku' Shankar exemplifies the complex issues surrounding social media influencers in India. On December 13, 2024, Chennai police arrested Shankar and five members of his team following allegations from a film producer. According to police reports, the producer claimed that Shankar's team physically assaulted him, extorted two lakh rupees, and demanded substantial additional payments to remove allegedly defamatory videos.

Shankar vehemently denied these accusations, calling them "fabricated" and insisting in a pre-arrest video that he had never met the film producer in question. His response highlights a pattern that has become all too familiar: accusations, counter-accusations, and a murky truth that often remains elusive in the court of public opinion.



This isn't Shankar's first brush with the law. Earlier in May 2024, he was arrested for making allegedly derogatory comments about women police officers. He was subsequently detained under the stringent Goondas Act for ganja possession, though the Supreme Court later ordered his release and protection from coercive action in multiple cases. His history reveals a controversial figure who operates in the grey zone between whistleblower journalism and provocative commentary, a zone where many modern YouTubers find themselves.

The Extortion Epidemic

The problem extends far beyond individual cases. Across India, a disturbing pattern has emerged where individuals claiming to be content creators use their platforms as instruments of coercion. The mechanisms vary, but the outcome remains consistent: victims paying substantial sums under threats of public exposure, defamation, or reputational damage. Consider the sophisticated sextortion schemes that have plagued the platform. Delhi Police arrested a 27-year-old man who impersonated both a YouTube employee and a police officer to extort money from victims.

His modus operandi was chillingly effective: establish contact through social media, record compromising footage during WhatsApp video calls, then demand payment to prevent public release. One victim alone paid over 25 lakh rupees across multiple transactions. This wasn't an isolated incident but part of a systematic operation targeting hundreds of people nationwide.

BLACKMAIL, DEFAMATION, AND MURDER

The consequences of unethical content creation extend beyond financial fraud. In extreme cases, YouTubers have been implicated in contributing to violence or being targets of violence themselves. The line between provocative commentary and incitement becomes dangerously thin when creators intentionally inflame communal tensions or target individuals with harassment campaigns. Bengal saw influencers become embroiled in a blackmail scandal involving private videos, with accusations of extortion reaching into lakhs of rupees. Such cases demonstrate how digital influence can facilitate traditional crimes at unprecedented scale—a single leak or threat can reach millions within hours.

More concerning still is how some YouTubers have used their platforms to directly threaten or extort specific individuals. By publicizing personal information, making accusations without evidence, or threatening to release damaging content, they create conditions where victims feel compelled to pay rather than face public humiliation or professional destruction.

The Journalist-YouTuber DISTINCTION

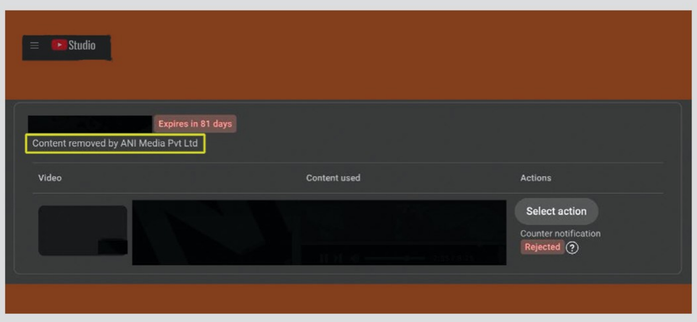
This brings us to a critical question: what separates a YouTuber from a journalist? The Madras High Court provided clarity in a landmark ruling, observing that social media personalities regularly commenting on public affairs enjoy the same constitutional protections as traditional journalists under Article 19(1)(a). This recognition grants YouTubers significant freedom of speech protections.

However, with such rights come responsibilities—responsibilities that many self-proclaimed digital journalists ignore. Traditional journalists operate under established ethical frameworks: verification of facts, balanced reporting, protection of sources, and accountability to editorial boards. They face professional consequences for ethical violations and legal consequences for defamation or false reporting.

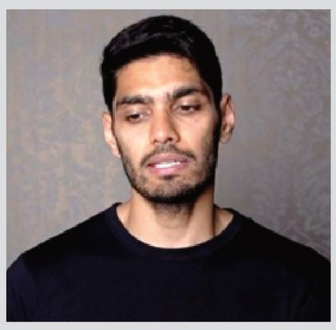
YouTubers, conversely, often operate without editorial oversight, fact-checking protocols, or professional accountability structures. Anyone with a smartphone and internet connection can claim the mantle of "citizen journalist" while engaging in practices that would end a traditional journalist's career. This lack of gatekeeping has democratized information but also opened floodgates for misinformation, sensationalism, and outright criminality.

When Copyright Becomes a Weapon

Perhaps more insidious are cases where content creators weaponize the very mechanisms designed to protect intellectual property. Multiple prominent YouTubers have alleged that larger organizations use copyright strikes as extortion tools, demanding lakhs of rupees to reverse strikes or grant licensing for clips lasting mere seconds. These allegations spotlight a vulnerability in digital platforms: automated copyright enforcement systems can be manipulated by those with resources and legal teams to silence criticism or extract payment. Small independent creators find themselves facing channel takedowns unless they pay substantial sums—amounts they can ill afford but must consider given that their livelihoods depend on platform access.



The Ethics Vacuum



The fundamental problem lies in an ethics vacuum. Senior journalists who have transitioned to YouTube bring decades of experience, editorial judgment, and internalized professional standards. But the platform has also enabled individuals with no journalistic training or ethical foundation to amass large followings by pandering to biases, manufacturing controversies, and prioritizing virality over veracity. Shailesh Shrivastava, contributing editor at Mongabay India, articulates this concern: experienced journalists who switch to YouTube follow journalism ethics in their work, but another breed of channels shows sensationalist content, breaches privacy, and creates content aimed solely at maximizing views.

This distinction matters enormously. Journalism serves democracy by holding power accountable and informing citizens. Sensationalism serves the creator's bank account by exploiting outrage, fear, and tribal loyalties. The former requires courage, integrity, and skill.

Addressing these issues presents significant challenges. India's digital media landscape operates in a regulatory grey area. The proposed Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill has sparked fierce debate, with creators arguing it threatens free speech while governments insist oversight is necessary to prevent harm.

The tension is real: over-regulation risks stifling the very independence that makes YouTube valuable as an alternative to co-opted mainstream media. Under-regulation allows criminals to hide behind constitutional protections while engaging in extortion and fraud. Current legal frameworks struggle to keep pace with digital realities. Copyright law lacks clear thresholds for fair use of brief clips. Defamation laws weren't designed for viral content that can destroy reputations within hours. Extortion laws don't adequately address threats mediated through platform algorithms and automated systems.

The Regulatory Challenge

The Path Forward

Solving this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach that balances freedom with accountability. First, platforms must refine their enforcement mechanisms to prevent weaponization of copyright strikes and other tools. Transparent appeal processes, penalties for false claims, and human review for high-stakes decisions would reduce opportunities for abuse.

Second, legal frameworks must evolve to address digital-age crimes more effectively. This includes clearer definitions of what constitutes fair use, streamlined processes for addressing defamation in viral contexts, and specific provisions addressing digital extortion schemes. Third, the creator community needs self-regulation. Established journalists-turned-YouTubers should develop and promote ethical guidelines for digital content creation. Professional associations could offer accreditation that distinguishes serious journalism from mere content creation. Fourth, media literacy education must become a priority. Audiences need tools to distinguish credible reporting from manipulation, to verify claims before sharing, and to recognize when content is designed to exploit rather than inform.Finally, law enforcement must receive training and resources to handle digital crimes effectively. Cases like Savukku Shankar's arrests demonstrate that traditional policing approaches struggle with the complexities of online influence, fair speech protections, and digital evidence. The YouTuber phenomenon in India represents both promise and peril. It has broken monopolies on information, given voice to marginalized perspectives, and created new pathways for talented individuals to reach audiences. Journalists forced out of co-opted mainstream media have found YouTube a lifeline for continuing important work.But the same technological democratization that enables these positive outcomes also empowers bad actors. Those who see influence as an opportunity for extortion, who use platforms to settle scores or extract payments, who hide criminality behind claims of journalism—these individuals undermine the legitimate work of thousands of honest creators and erode public trust in digital media. The solution isn't to paint all YouTubers with the same brush or to implement draconian controls that stifle free expression. Rather, it's to recognize that with the power of mass communication comes responsibility—a responsibility that must be enforced through a combination of platform policies, legal frameworks, professional standards, and societal expectations.

'THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE': MESSI DAZZLES HYDERABAD

Hyd witnessed football fever as Messi dazzled fans with goals, gestures and heartfelt gratitude

HYDERABAD

Football fever gripped Hyderabad as the GOAT India Tour reached the city, with global icon Lionel Messi receiving a rousing welcome at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium. After a chaotic start to his India visit in Kolkata, the Hyderabad leg unfolded smoothly and ended on a celebratory note.

Messi, accompanied by Inter Miami teammates Luis Suarez and Rodrigo de Paul, first watched an exhibition match featuring Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Reddy scored the fourth goal for his team RR9, which defeated Aparna All Stars 4–0.

Following the match, Messi entered the field to deafening cheers, greeting players from both teams and exchanging passes with the Chief Minister. Suarez and de Paul joined him as Messi entertained the crowd by kicking balls into the stands, performing keepie-uppies and eventually converting a penalty during a shootout.

The football legend also met Congress president Rahul Gandhi, with the two sharing a handshake and posing for photographs alongside Suarez, de Paul and Reddy. Messi later presented the GOAT Cup to the exhibition match winners.

"Thank you very much for all your love," Messi said in Spanish, drawing loud applause from fans. De Paul added, "I'm very happy. This has been a very special night. Thank you for the love and care."

The evening concluded with Revanth Reddy presenting a trophy to Messi, while Rahul Gandhi was gifted an Argentina jersey. Earlier, the Chief Minister and officials had welcomed Messi on his arrival in the city before he was escorted to Falaknuma Palace for his stay.

The excitement grew further with Rahul Gandhi's arrival in Hyderabad for an exclusive meet-and-greet with the football superstar, marking a memorable night for fans in the city.

Messi Meets Shah Rukh Khan During GOAT Tour in Kolkata

KOLKATA

Global football icon Lionel Messi met Bollywood superstar and Kolkata Knight Rider's co-owner Shah Rukh Khan during his much-anticipated GOAT Tour in Kolkata on Saturday. Shah Rukh was accompanied by his younger son, AbRam Khan, as the two shared a warm interaction with the Argentine legend at the Salt Lake Stadium. Messi, Argentina's World Cup-winning captain, arrived in Kolkata late Friday night as part of his three-day visit to India. Thousands of fans gathered at the airport and outside his hotel to catch a glimpse of the footballing great. Joining Messi on the tour are his Argentina teammate Rodrygo de Paul and Inter Miami colleague Luis Suarez. As part of the celebrations, Messi virtually unveiled a towering 70-foot statue of himself in Lake Town, near the Sribhumi clock tower. The event, hosted by West Bengal Minister Sujit Bose, was attended by Suarez and de Paul. Expressing his appreciation, Messi greeted fans with a heartfelt "Muchas Gracias" before continuing his address in Spanish.

Lee Shines as Hobart Hurricanes Win Maiden WBBL

HOBART

After Wyatt-Hodge fell, Lee dominated Alana King with successive sixes and boundaries, sealing victory and a record-breaking unbeaten half-century

Lizelle Lee delivered a memorable, record-breaking performance to guide Hobart Hurricanes to their first-ever Women's Big Bash League title, as they outplayed Perth Scorchers in a one-sided final on Saturday.

After a disciplined bowling display restricted the Scorchers to a modest 137 for 5, the Hurricanes completed the chase with ease, winning with five overs to spare. Lee led from the front, launching the innings with three boundaries in the opening over. Danielle Wyatt-Hodge added momentum at the top, helping Hobart race to 24 without loss in the first two overs and putting the Scorchers immediately under pressure.

Wyatt-Hodge fell in the sixth over, but Lee continued to dominate the bowling attack. Nat Sciver-Brunt provided valuable support, striking timely boundaries to keep the chase firmly in Hobart's control.

The turning point came when Lee took on Alana King, smashing consecutive sixes followed by well-placed boundaries in the next over.

Brief scores

Perth Scorchers Women 137/5 in 20 overs (Sophie Devine 34, Beth Mooney 33; Linsey Smith 2-8) lost to Hobart Hurricanes Women 141/2 in 15 overs (Lizelle Lee 77*, Nat Sciver-Brunt 35; Amy Edgar 1-13) by 8 wickets.

The burst of runs brought up Lee's unbeaten half-century, effectively sealing the contest, while also setting a new record for the highest individual score in a WBBL final.

Earlier, Perth Scorchers struggled for fluency after opting to bat first. Katie Mack fell early, while Beth Mooney, despite getting several chances, was dismissed for 33 by Heather Graham. Sophie Devine and Paige Scholfield attempted a late push, but regular breakthroughs ensured the Scorchers fell short of a competitive total.

Trump Honors 1980 Miracle on Ice Heroes With Congressional Medals at White House

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump paid tribute to members of the United States men's ice hockey team that achieved the historic Miracle on Ice victory over the Soviet Union at the 1980 Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid. The President hosted several players from the gold medal-winning squad at the Oval Office, marking one of the most celebrated moments in American sporting history.

During the ceremony, Trump signed a bill authorising the awarding of congressional medals to the team in recognition of their extraordinary achievement. The former players arrived wearing white cowboy hats, a nod to the hats famously worn by the team during the opening ceremony of the 1980 Winter Olympics. Trump briefly donned one of the hats himself, drawing smiles and applause from those in attendance.

This was one of the biggest moments that I've ever seen in sports, Trump said, praising the players for delivering one of the most storied athletic wins of all time. He described the victory as a defining moment that transcended sport and became a symbol of national pride during a tense period of the Cold War.

The event was attended by 13 members of the iconic team, including captain Mike Eruzione, goaltender Jim Craig, and forward Buzz Schneider. Also present was the son of the late head coach Herb Brooks, whose leadership and belief in his young team were widely credited as key factors behind the historic triumph.

Usman Khawaja Confident of Ashes Role Despite Selection Debate Ahead of Third Test

ADELAIDE

Australian opener Usman Khawaja has played down speculation surrounding his omission from the playing XI, even as debate intensifies over his absence from the third Ashes Test against England at the Adelaide Oval. Despite being left out after Australia secured victories in the first two Tests with a new opening combination, the veteran batter remains confident of his place in the squad and his ability to contribute.

Khawaja, who will turn 39 on the second day of the Adelaide Test, stated that he is 100 percent fit and fully prepared to play if selected. However, he acknowledged that the final decision rests with the team management, leaving his immediate future uncertain. Australia have enjoyed success with Travis Head and Jake Weatherald at the top of the order, adding further intrigue to the selection call.

Unfazed by rumours regarding his playing future, the 85-Test veteran emphasised that he still feels valued within the team environment. I'm still valued by the team, still asked to be here to play, so I'm here, Khawaja said in remarks quoted by Cricket Australia. He added that his focus remains on enjoying his cricket and contributing professionally rather than clinging on for longevity's sake.

Khawaja highlighted his adaptability and experience across formats, underlining that his career record reflects sustained consistency rather than short-term performances. He dismissed suggestions that comments made by Head had any bearing on his mindset, reiterating that he remains fully committed to representing Australia. I love playing for Australia, I'm still very committed. I train hard, I do everything right, he asserted.

The left-hander also made it clear that external opinions do not concern him. According to Khawaja, professionalism means focusing on preparation and performance, not speculation outside the squad.

Odisha Masters Super 100: Hooda, Isharani Set Up Women's Final

CUTTACK

Top seed Unnati Hooda and fellow Indian Isharani Baruah advanced to the women's singles final of the Odisha Masters Super 100 with contrasting semifinal wins on Friday.

Hooda, champion of the 2022 edition and the 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters, was tested by world No. 1 Tasnim Mir before clinching a hard-fought 18-21, 21-16, 21-16 victory in a match that lasted over an hour. After dropping the opening game, Hooda raised her intensity, controlled the rallies better and showed superior composure in the closing stages of the next two games.

In the other semifinal, Assam's Isharani staged an impressive comeback to defeat Tanvi Hemanth 18-21, 21-16, 21-13 to book her place in the final.

In men's singles, second seed Kiran George and Rounak Chouhan, both members of India's junior championship medal-winning squad, will face off in the semifinal.

In doubles, India's S. Kanapuram and R. Uthayasooriyan exited after a 6-21, 19-21 loss to fifth-seeded Indonesians Dejan Ferdinansyah and B. Wardana, who handled pressure moments better to seal a straight-game win and progress further.

TPL is part of a dream to expand and popularise tennis

AHMEDABAD

Indian tennis icons Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi expressed their excitement as they appeared together on day four of the Tennis Premier League. Paes attended as the Brand Ambassador of GS Delhi Aces, while Bhupathi was present in support of SG Pipers Bengaluru.

The duo, who won three Grand Slam titles together and rose to World No. 1 as a pair, have long supported the league and were in attendance on the fourth day of Season 7.

Sharing his excitement, Paes said, It's wonderful to be in Ahmedabad. The weather is fantastic to start with, and to see the extravagance of the Tennis Premier League here is part of a dream to expand and popularise tennis throughout the country.

I am very grateful to Sania, Rohan, Mahesh, and all the stars who support the league. When you look at the players, we have managed to bring together juniors, professionals, boys and girls, and add an international flavour. To have the entire fraternity of tennis come together here is special, he added.

SG Pipers Bengaluru narrowly beat the GS Delhi Aces 49-51 in the third match of the day.

Reflecting on the evening's matchups, Paes noted, Tonight I played against Rohan and Mahesh's team. Mahesh was up against Sanya's team earlier. These competitive rivalries are what make sport such a unifier.

The GS Delhi Aces are on the top of the points table with 211 points. Speaking about the season and his team's form, he said, The season is going great. I am a little biased toward my own team. The Delhi Aces are on top right now but there is a lot of tennis still to go. The format here is very interesting. Paes also touched on his role with the Delhi-based team. To play for your people for 40 years, to win 20 Grand Slams and play 7 Olympics are blessings.

Former Michigan Coach Sherrone Moore Charged With Stalking and Home Invasion After Firing

MICHIGAN

Sherrone Moore, the former head football coach of the University of Michigan, was charged with three criminal offenses, including stalking and home invasion, intensifying the legal troubles surrounding his abrupt dismissal earlier this week. Moore, who is also a suspect in an alleged assault case, was fired by the university on Wednesday following allegations of inappropriate conduct.

According to law enforcement officials, the charges stem from incidents that allegedly occurred prior to Moore's termination from the prestigious college football program. While full details of the case have not yet been made public, authorities confirmed that the charges include stalking, home invasion, and one additional offense connected to the ongoing investigation.

Moore is expected to face further legal proceedings in the coming days.

The University of Michigan announced Moore's firing on Wednesday, citing allegations that he had engaged in an inappropriate relationship, which the institution said violated university policies and ethical standards expected of senior athletic staff. At the time of his dismissal, the university stated that it was cooperating fully with law enforcement agencies and conducting its own internal review.

Melbourne Renegades sign Andrew Tye ahead of BBL 15

MELBOURNE

Melbourne Renegades on Saturday announced the signing of experienced campaigner Andrew Tye to bolster their bowling attack ahead of the season's opener. On the eve of the Renegades' season-opening match against the Brisbane Heat on Monday night at GMHBA Stadium, Tye joins the team to replace bowler Tom Rogers, who has been ruled out.

Possessing one of Big Bash's most outstanding records, Tye has played 105 BBL matches and taken over 150 wickets, making him one of the league's leading death-over specialists.

I'm genuinely excited about this move — it's a great bunch of fellas with serious talent and I'm looking forward to cracking in, Tye said.

The Renegades play a great brand of cricket and the direction the club is heading under Whitey (Cameron White) really appeals to me. The chats I've had with the coaching staff were clear — they know how they want to play and where I fit.

I've always prided myself on competing and taking ownership of big moments, and I'm looking forward to contributing to this group.

Tye will reunite with familiar faces at the Renegades, including former Perth Scorchers teammate Jason Behrendorff, who joined the club earlier this year.

AR Rahman To Receive Lakshminarayana Award In Chennai

Music legend A R Rahman will be honoured with the Lakshminarayana International Award on December 15 at the curtain raiser of the Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival 2025. The ceremony, scheduled at Rasika Ranjani Sabha in Chennai, marks the launch of the festival's 35th edition. The award celebrates outstanding contributions in the arts and this year recognises Rahman's remarkable impact on music.

Rahman, a two-time Academy Award winner, has transformed the sound of Indian cinema and global music. With more than 150 million records sold across over 100 albums and soundtracks, his iconic works include Roja, Bombay, Dil Se, Taal, Lagaan, Slumdog Millionaire and 127 Hours.

Trained in Western classical music at Trinity College, Rahman established Panchathan Record Inn in Chennai and made his debut with Roja, earning a National Award. He later won six more, the highest for any Indian composer. He is also a recipient of the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan.

Beyond films, Rahman continues to innovate with projects like the VR film Le Musk and by mentoring young talent through KM Music Conservatory, Sunshine Orchestra, Firdaus Orchestra, and his ensembles Rooh-e-Noor and Jhalaa. His foundation also supports education and philanthropy.

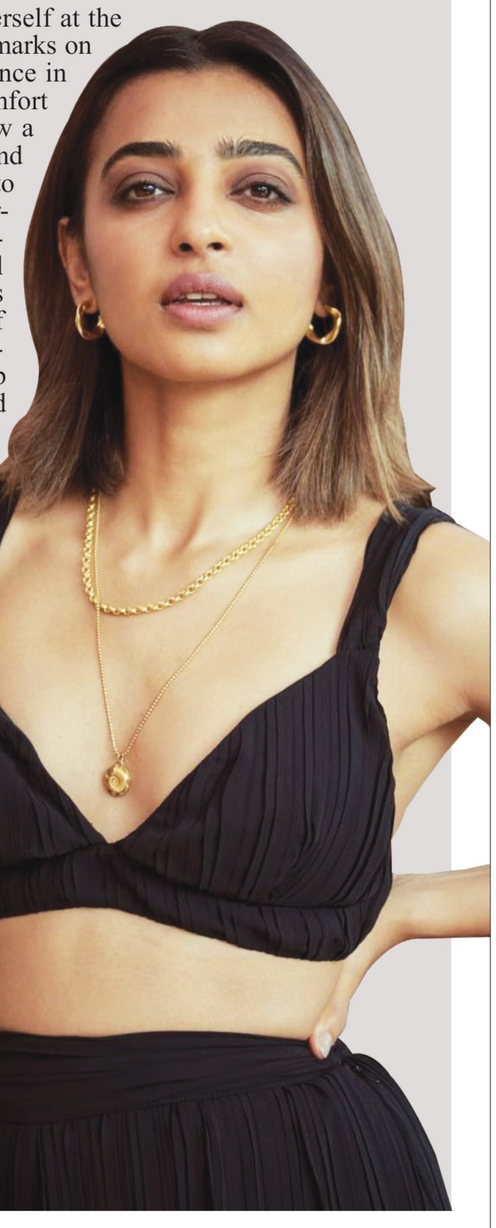
Named among Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People and appointed Honorary President of Trinity Laban in 2024, Rahman bridges tradition and technology on the global stage. His collaboration with Dr L Subramaniam in 2023 to recreate Don't Leave Me further highlighted his enduring legacy.

Lost Land Wins Best Film At Red Sea Festival

The Red Sea International Film Festival concluded in Jeddah with a landmark win for Lost Land, the first feature film made entirely in the Rohingya language. Directed by Japanese filmmaker Akio Fujimoto, the refugee drama won the Golden Yusr for Best Film along with a USD 100,000 cash prize, presented by jury head Sean Baker. The film tells the emotional story of siblings Somira and Shafi as they flee persecution in Myanmar and attempt a dangerous journey to Malaysia, facing smugglers, fear, and exploitation. Lost Land previously premiered at the Venice Film Festival in the Orizzonti section and earned major awards at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards. Other notable winners included Cherien Dabis' All That's Left of You, Shahad Ameen's Hijra, and Ameer Fakher Eldin's Yunan. Held from December 6 to 13, the festival drew international stars, celebrating global cinema.

Radhika Apte Faces Backlash Over Comments On Violence

Actress Radhika Apte recently found herself at the center of controversy following her remarks on the increasing prevalence of graphic violence in Indian cinema. Expressing personal discomfort with violent content, Radhika, who is now a mother and lives in London with her husband Benedict Taylor, said she would not want to raise her child in an environment where entertainment relies heavily on brutality. Her comments quickly sparked debate across social media platforms. Critics accused the actress of hypocrisy, pointing to her own body of work that includes violent films such as Rakta Charitra, Badlapur, and the popular web series Sacred Games, all known for intense and graphic scenes. Many argued that her past choices contradict her current stance. However, supporters came to her defense, stating that her comments were rooted in her perspective as a parent rather than her professional identity as an actor. They emphasized that personal growth and changing priorities, especially after motherhood, can influence opinions without undermining past work. The controversy gained further traction as her remarks coincided with the box office success of Dhurandhar, a film noted for its graphic violence. Though she did not reference the film directly, many interpreted her statements as a subtle critique. The debate has reignited discussions on violence, responsibility, and storytelling in Indian cinema.



Dacoit Hindi Teaser Launches December 18 In Two Cities

The makers of Dacoit, starring Adivi Sesh and Mrunal Thakur, are set to unveil the film's Hindi logo and teaser on December 18, ahead of its theatrical release on March 19, 2026. The launch will be marked by a special two-city event, with the Hindi teaser revealed in Mumbai and the Telugu version simultaneously in Hyderabad.

Directed by Shaneil Deo, Dacoit is a romance action thriller built around betrayal and revenge. Adivi Sesh plays a man wrongly convicted and sent to prison, who later seeks retribution against the woman who betrayed him. Mrunal Thakur takes on an action-heavy role, adding intensity to the narrative.

Earlier this year, a short teaser was shared, offering audiences a glimpse of the film's tone. Sesh, known for thrillers like HIT, Major, and Goodachari, revealed that the film even features him dancing on screen, something he never imagined himself doing. I've always been drawn to intense stories and action-heavy roles, and honestly, dancing on camera was something I never imagined myself doing, he told.

The film also boasts a strong supporting cast, including Prakash Raj, Anurag Kashyap, Atul Kulkarni, Sunil, Zayn Marie Khan, and Kamakshi Bhaskarla. With its mix of romance, action, and emotional drama, Dacoit promises to be a gripping cinematic experience.

The December 18 teaser launch officially kickstarts the film's promotional campaign, building anticipation for its release in March next year.

Regena Cassandrra Marks 35th Birthday With Family Feast

Actress Regena Cassandrra celebrated her 35th birthday on Saturday with loved ones and her favourite South Indian food. Sharing her joy, she said, Turning 35 with a lot of gratitude for my life, family, well wishers. I am celebrating with them and it's just going to be good vibes and a lot of positivity along with good South Indian food which is my favourite.

This year is particularly special for Cassandrra as she also completed 20 years in Indian cinema.

Reflecting on her journey, she noted that she feels like she is just getting started, with much more to look forward to, including her upcoming releases Mookuthi Amman 2 and The Wives in 2026.

Born in Chennai and raised in Coorg, Karnataka, Cassandrra began her career as a model before debuting in films with the Kannada movie Suryakanthi. She gained wider recognition in Telugu cinema with Jyo Achyutananda, praised for her emotional depth.

In Tamil cinema, she is known for balancing commercial appeal with strong character roles. Maanagaram marked a turning point, while Silukkuvarupatti Singam, Mr. Chandramouli, and Soorarai Pottru cemented her reputation, with the latter earning global acclaim. Cassandrra has also made her mark in digital entertainment, with notable performances in The Rocket Boys and Suzhal: The Vortex. As she celebrates her milestone birthday, her career continues to shine across industries, blending versatility with authenticity.

Indian Filmmakers Embrace Real Locations Over VFX Magic

Indian filmmakers are increasingly favoring real locations over heavy green screens and CGI to bring authenticity and emotional depth to their stories. Films like Rishab Shetty's Kantara gained power from shooting in Kundapura, where beaches, forests, and local culture enhanced its spiritual narrative. Malayalam classics like Manichitrathazhu and films such as Raavan also showcased how heritage sites and natural landscapes elevate storytelling. Inspired by filmmakers like Christopher Nolan, Indian directors are embracing real environments to capture raw emotion. With projects like Kantara 2 and Varanasi, cinema is becoming more grounded, immersive, and culturally connected.

Shane Nigam's Haal Gets Court Nod For Christmas Release

Shane Nigam's much-awaited film Haal is finally set to release this Christmas after clearing legal hurdles. The High Court has approved the film's screening, overturning several censorship cuts earlier demanded by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

Directed by Veera, Haal faced controversy when the CBFC ordered six cuts, including a scene showing beef biryani consumption. The filmmakers challenged the directive, and a single bench revoked four of the cuts. Appeals by the CBFC and Catholic Congress were later dismissed, with the division bench upholding the earlier verdict. Judges reportedly watched the film in full before ruling, noting they enjoyed the film.

To mark the clearance, the makers unveiled a new poster carrying the line, Finally reaching audiences with court approval. The poster also features headlines from the controversy, symbolizing the film's journey to release.

The movie stars Shane Nigam alongside Sakshi Vaidya in the lead, with a strong ensemble cast including Johnny Antony, Vineeth Beepkumar, Joy Mathew, Sangeetha Madhavan Nair, Nishanth Sagar, and others.

Haal will release in multiple languages—Malayalam, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada—expanding its reach beyond Kerala. The film's Christmas release is expected to draw significant attention, especially after Nigam's recent success with the action hit RDX.

With the legal battles now behind it, Haal is ready to present its story to audiences nationwide, making its release one of the season's most talked-about events.

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